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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT IN 1846

THE LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

EDITED WITH BIOGRAPHICAL ADDITIONS

BY

FREDERIC G. KENYON

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE

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PREFACE

THE writer of any narrative of Mrs. Browning's life, or the editor of a collection of her letters, is met at the outset of his task by the knowledge that both Mrs. Browning herself and her husband more than once expressed their strong dislike of any such publicity in regard to matters of a personal and private character affecting themselves. The fact that expressions to this effect are publicly extant is one which has to be faced or evaded; but if it could not be fairly faced, and the apparent difficulty removed, the present volumes would never have seen the light. It would be a poor qualification for the task of preparing a record of Mrs. Browning's life, to be willing therein to do violence to her own expressed wishes and those of her husband. But the expressions to which reference has been made are limited, either formally or by implication, to publications made during their own lifetime. They shrank, as any sensitive person must shrink, from seeing their private lives, their personal characteristics, above all, their sorrows and bereavements, offered to the inspection and criticism of the general public; and it was to such publications that their

protests referred. They could not but be aware that the details of their lives would be of interest to the public which read and admired their works, and there is evidence that they recognised that the public has some claims with regard to writers who have appealed to, and partly lived by, its favour. They only claimed that during their own lifetime their feelings should be consulted first; when they should have passed away, the rights of the public would begin.

It is in this spirit that the following collection of Mrs. Browning's letters has now been prepared, in the conviction that the lovers of English literature will be glad to make a closer and more intimate acquaintance with one — or, it may truthfully be said, with two — of the most interesting literary characters of the Victorian age. It is a selection from a large mass of letters, written at all periods in Mrs. Browning's life, which Mr. Browning, after his wife's death, reclaimed from the friends to whom they had been written, or from their representatives. No doubt, Mr. Browning's primary object was to prevent publications which would have been excessively distressing to his feelings; but the letters, when once thus collected, were not destroyed (as was the case with many of his own letters), but carefully preserved, and so passed into the possession of his son, Mr. R. Barrett Browning, with whose consent they are now published. In this collection are comprised the letters to Miss Browning (the poet's sister, whose consent has also been freely given to the publication), Mr. H. S. Boyd, Mrs. Martin, Miss Mitford, Mrs. Jameson, Mr. John Kenyon, Mr. Chorley,

Miss Blagden, Miss Haworth, and Miss Thomson (Madame Emil Braun).[1] To these have been added a number of letters which have been kindly lent by their possessors for the purpose of the present volumes.

The duties of the editor have been mainly those of selection and arrangement. With regard to the former task one word is necessary. It may be thought that the almost entire absence of bitterness (except on certain political topics), of controversy, of personal ill feeling of any kind, is due to editorial excisions. This is not the case. The number of passages that have been removed for fear of hurting the feelings of persons still living is almost infinitesimal; and in these the cause of offence is always something inherent in the facts recorded, not in the spirit in which they are mentioned. No person had less animosity than Mrs. Browning; it seems as though she could hardly bring herself to speak harshly of anyone. The omissions that have been made are almost wholly of passages containing little or nothing of interest, or repetitions of what has been said elsewhere; and they have been made with the object of diminishing the bulk and concentrating the interest of the collection, never with the purpose of modifying the representation of the writer's character.

The task of arranging the letters has been more arduous

[1] Mrs. Sutherland Orr had access to these letters for her biography of Robert Browning, and quotes several passages from them. With this exception, none of the letters have been published previously; and the published letters of Miss Barrett to Mr. R. H. Horne have not been drawn upon, except for biographical information.

owing to Mrs. Browning's unfortunate habit of prefixing no dates, or incomplete ones, to her letters. Many of them are dated merely by the day of the week or month, and can only be assigned to their proper place in the series on internal evidence. In some cases, however, the envelopes have been preserved, and the date is then often provided by the postmarks. These supply fixed points by which the others can be tested; and ultimately all have fallen into line in chronological order, and with at least approximate dates to each letter.

The correspondence, thus arranged in chronological order, forms an almost continuous record of Mrs. Browning's life, from the early days in Herefordshire to her death in Italy in 1861; but in order to complete the record, it has been thought well to add connecting links of narrative, which should serve to bind the whole together into the unity of a biography. It is a chronicle, rather than a biography in the artistic sense of the term; a chronicle of the events of a life in which there were but few external events of importance, and in which the subject of the picture is, for the most part, left to paint her own portrait, and that, moreover, unconsciously. Still, this is a method which may be held to have its advantages, in that it can hardly be affected by the feelings or prejudices of the biographer; and if it does not present a finished portrait to the reader, it provides him with the materials from which he can form a portrait for himself. The external events are placed upon record, either in the letters or in the connecting

links of narrative; the character and opinions of Mrs. Browning reveal themselves in her correspondence; and her genius is enshrined in her poetry. And these three elements make up all that may be known of her personality, all with which a biographer has to deal.

It is essentially her character, not her genius, that is presented to the reader of these letters. There are some letter writers whose genius is so closely allied with their daily life that it shines through into their familiar correspondence with their friends, and their letters become literature. Such, in their very different ways, with very different types of genius and very different habits of daily life, are Gray, Cowper, Lamb, perhaps Fitzgerald. But letter writers such as these are few. More often the correspondence of men and women of letters is valuable for the light it throws upon the character and opinions of those whose character and opinions we are led to regard with admiration or respect, or at least interest, on account of their other writings. In these cases it may be held that the publication is justifiable or not, according as the character which it reveals is affected favourably or the reverse. Not all truth, even about famous men, is useful for publication, but only such as enables us to appreciate better the works which have made them famous. Their highest selves are expressed in their literary work; and it is a poor service to truth to insist on bringing to light the fact that they also had lower selves — common, dull, it may be vicious. What illustrates their genius and enhances our respect for their character may rightly be

made known; but what shakes our belief and mars our enjoyment in them, is simply better left in obscurity.

With regard to Mrs. Browning, however, there is no room for doubt upon these points. These letters, familiarly written to her private friends, without the smallest idea of publication, treating of the thoughts that came uppermost in the ordinary language of conversation, can lay no claim to make a new revelation of her genius. On the other hand, perhaps because the circumstances of Mrs. Browning's life cut her off to an unusual extent from personal intercourse with her friends, and threw her back upon letter writing as her principal means of communication with them, they contain an unusually full revelation of her character. And this is not wholly unconnected with her literary genius, since her personal convictions, her moral character, entered more fully than is often the case into the composition of her poetry. Her best poetry is that which is most full of her personal emotions. The 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' the 'Cry of the Children,' 'Cowper's Grave,' the 'Dead Pan,' 'Aurora Leigh,' and all the Italian poems owe their value to the pure and earnest character, the strong love of truth and right, the enthusiasm on behalf of what is oppressed and the indignation against all kinds of oppression and wrong, which were prominent elements in a personality of exceptional worth and beauty.

An editor can generally serve his readers best by remaining in the background; but he is allowed one moment for the expression of his personal feelings, when he thanks those

who have assisted him in his work. In the present case there are many to whom it is a pleasure to offer such thanks. In the first place, I have to thank Mr. R. Barrett Browning and Miss Browning most cordially for having accepted the proposal of the publishers (Messrs. Smith, Elder & Co., to whom likewise my gratitude is due) to put so pleasant and congenial a task into my hands. Mr. Browning has also contributed a number of suggestions and corrections while the sheets have been passing through the press. I have also to thank those who have been kind enough to offer letters in their possession for inclusion in these volumes: Lady Alwyne Compton for the letters to Mr. Westwood; Mrs. Arthur Severn for the letters to Mr. Ruskin; Mr. G. L. Craik for the letters to Miss Mulock; Mrs. Commeline for the letters to Miss Commeline; Mr. T. J. Wise for the letters to Mr. Cornelius Mathews; Mr. C. Aldrich for the letter to Mrs. Kinney; Col. T. W. Higginson for a letter to Miss Channing; and the Rev. G. Bainton for a letter to Mr. Kenyon. It has not been possible to print all the letters which have been thus offered; but this does not diminish the kindness of the lenders, nor the gratitude of the editor.

Finally, I should wish to offer my sincere thanks to Lady Edmond Fitzmaurice for much assistance and advice in the selection and revision of the letters; a labour which her friendship with Mr. Browning towards the close of his life has prompted her to bestow most freely and fully upon this memorial of his wife.

F. G. K.

July 1897.

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THE LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CHAPTER I

1806–1835

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, still better known to the world as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, was born on March 6, 1806, the eldest child of Edward and Mary Moulton Barrett. Both the date and place of her birth have been matters of uncertainty and dispute, and even so trustworthy an authority as the 'Dictionary of National Biography' is inaccurate with respect to them. All doubt has, however, been set at rest by the discovery of the entry of her birth in the parish register of Kelloe Church, in the county of Durham.[1] She was born at Coxhoe Hall, the residence of Mr. Barrett's only brother, Samuel, about five miles south of the city of Durham. Her father, whose name was originally Edward Barrett Moulton, had assumed the additional surname of Barrett on the death of his maternal grandfather, to whose estates in Jamaica he was the heir. Of Mr. Barrett it is recorded by Mr. Browning, in the notes prefixed by him to the collected edition of his wife's poems, that 'on the early death of his father he was brought from Jamaica to England when a very young child, as a ward of the

[1] See *Notes and Queries* for July 20, 1889, supplemented by a note from Mr. Browning himself in the same paper on August 24.

late Chief Baron Lord Abinger, then Mr. Scarlett, whom he frequently accompanied in his post-chaise when on circuit. He was sent to Harrow, but received there so savage a punishment for a supposed offence (burning the toast)' — which, indeed, has been a 'supposed offence' at other schools than Harrow — 'by the youth whose fag he had become, that he was withdrawn from the school by his mother, and the delinquent was expelled. At the age of sixteen he was sent by Mr. Scarlett to Cambridge, and thence, for an early marriage, went to Northumberland.' His wife was Miss Mary Graham-Clarke, daughter of J. Graham-Clarke, of Fenham Hall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but of her nothing seems to be known, and her comparatively early death causes her to be little heard of in the record of her daughter's life.

Nothing is to be gained by trying to trace back the genealogy of the Barrett family, and it need merely be noted that it had been connected for some generations with the island of Jamaica, and owned considerable estates there.[1] It is a curious coincidence that Robert Browning was likewise in part of West Indian descent, and so, too, was John Kenyon, the lifelong friend of both, by whose means the poet and poetess were first introduced to one another.

The family of Mr. Edward Barrett was a fairly large one, consisting, besides Elizabeth, of two daughters, Henrietta and Arabel, and eight sons — Edward, whose tragic death at Torquay saddened so much of his sister's life, Charles (the 'Stormie' of the letters), Samuel, George, Henry, Alfred, Septimus, and Octavius; Mr. Barrett's inventiveness having apparently given out with the last two members of his family, reducing him to the primitive method of simple enumeration, an enumeration in which, it may be observed, the daughters counted for nothing. Not many of these, however, can have been born at Coxhoe; for while Elizabeth

[1] These estates still remain in the family, and Mr. Charles Barrett, the eldest surviving brother of Mrs. Browning, now lives there.

was still an infant — apparently about the beginning of the year 1809 — Mr. Barrett removed to his newly purchased estate of Hope End, in Herefordshire, among the Malvern hills, and only a few miles from Malvern itself. It is to Hope End that the admirers of Mrs. Browning must look as the real home of her childhood and youth. Here she spent her first twenty years of conscious life. Here is the scene of the childish reminiscences which are to be found among her earlier poems, of 'Hector in the Garden,' 'The Lost Bower,' and 'The Deserted Garden.' And here too her earliest verses were written, and the foundations laid of that omnivorous reading of literature of all sorts and kinds, which was so strong a characteristic of her tastes and leanings.

On this subject she may be left to tell her own tale. In a letter written on October 5, 1843, to Mr. R. H. Horne, she furnishes him with the following biographical details for his study of her in 'The New Spirit of the Age.' They supply us with nearly all that we know of her early life and writings.

'And then as to stories, my story amounts to the knife-grinder's, with nothing at all for a catastrophe. A bird in a cage would have as good a story. Most of my events, and nearly all my intense pleasures, have passed in my *thoughts*. I wrote verses — as I dare say many have done who never wrote any poems — very early; at eight years old and earlier. But, what is less common, the early fancy turned into a will, and remained with me, and from that day to this, poetry has been a distinct object with me — an object to read, think, and live for. And I could make you laugh, although you could not make the public laugh, by the narrative of nascent odes, epics, and didactics crying aloud on obsolete muses from childish lips. The Greeks were my demi-gods, and haunted me out of Pope's Homer, until I dreamt more of Agamemnon than of Moses the black pony. And thus my great "epic" of eleven or twelve years old, in four books, and called "The Battle of Marathon," and of which fifty

copies were printed because papa was bent upon spoiling me — is Pope's Homer done over again, or rather undone; for, although a curious production for a child, it gives evidence only of an imitative faculty and an ear, and a good deal of reading in a peculiar direction. The love of Pope's Homer threw me into Pope on one side and into Greek on the other, and into Latin as a help to Greek — and the influence of all these tendencies is manifest so long afterwards as in my "Essay on Mind," a didactic poem written when I was seventeen or eighteen, and long repented of as worthy of all repentance. The poem is imitative in its form, yet is not without traces of an individual thinking and feeling — the bird pecks through the shell in it. With this it has a pertness and pedantry which did not even then belong to the character of the author, and which I regret now more than I do the literary defectiveness.

'All this time, and indeed the greater part of my life, we lived at Hope End, a few miles from Malvern, in a retirement scarcely broken to me except by books and my own thoughts, and it is a beautiful country, and was a retirement happy in many ways, although the very peace of it troubles the heart as it looks back. There I had my fits of Pope, and Byron, and Coleridge, and read Greek as hard under the trees as some of your Oxonians in the Bodleian; gathered visions from Plato and the dramatists, and eat and drank Greek and made my head ache with it. Do you know the Malvern Hills? The hills of Piers Plowman's Visions? They seem to me my native hills; for, although I was born in the county of Durham, I was an infant when I went first into their neighbourhood, and lived there until I had passed twenty by several years. Beautiful, beautiful hills they are! And yet, not for the whole world's beauty would I stand in the sunshine and the shadow of the many more. It would be a mockery, like the taking back of a broken flower to its stalk.'[1]

[1] R. H. Horne, *Letters of E. B. Browning*, i. 158–161.

So, while the young Robert Browning was enthusiastically declaiming passages of Pope's Homer, and measuring out heroic couplets with his hand round the dining table in Camberwell, Elizabeth Barrett was drinking from the same fount of inspiration among the Malvern Hills, and was already turning it to account in the production of her first epic. The fifty copies of the 'Battle of Marathon' which Mr. Barrett, proud of his daughter's precocity, insisted on having printed, bear the date of 1819. Only five of them are now known to exist, and these are all in private hands; even the British Museum possesses only the reprint which the hero-worship of the present generation caused to be produced in 1891. Seven years later, when she had just reached the age of twenty, her first volume of verse was offered to the world in general. It was entitled 'An Essay on Mind, and other Poems,' and included, besides the didactic poem after the manner of Pope which formed the *pièce de résistance*, a number of shorter pieces, several of which, as she informed Horne,[1] had been written when she was not more than thirteen.

It was during the years at Hope End that Elizabeth Barrett was first attacked by serious illness. 'At fifteen,' she says in her autobiographical letter, already quoted in part, 'I nearly died;' and this may be connected with a statement by Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, to the effect that 'one day, when Elizabeth was about fifteen, the young girl, impatient for her ride, tried to saddle her pony alone, in a field, and fell with the saddle upon her, in some way injuring her spine so seriously that she was for years upon her back.'[2] The latter part of this statement cannot indeed be quite accurate; for her period of long confinement to a sick-room was of later date, and began, according to her own statement, from a different cause. Mr. R. Barrett Browning states that the injury to the spine was not dis-

[1] R. H. Horne, *Letters of E. B. Browning*, i. 164.

[2] *Dict. of Nat. Biography*, vii. 78.

covered for some time, but was afterwards attributed, not to a fall, but to a strain whilst tightening her pony's girths. No doubt this injury contributed towards the general weakness of health to which she was always subject.

Of her earliest letters, belonging to the Hope End period, very few have been preserved, and most of those which remain are of little interest. The first to be printed here belongs to the period of her mother's last illness, which ended in her death on October 1, 1828. It is addressed to Mrs. James Martin, a lifelong friend, whose name will appear frequently in these pages. At the time when it was written she was living near Tewkesbury, within visiting distance of the Barretts.

To Mrs. Martin

Hope End: Thursday, [about September 1828].

My dear Mrs. Martin, — I am happy to be able to tell you that Mr. Carden was here two days ago, and that he has not thought it necessary to adopt any violent measure with regard to our beloved invalid. He seems entirely to rely, for her ultimate restoration, upon a discipline as to diet, and a course of strengthening medicine. This is most satisfactory to us; and her spirits have been soothed and tranquillised by his visit. She has slept quietly for the last few nights, and reports herself to be *brisker* and stronger, and to be comparatively free from pain. This account is, perhaps, too favorable,[1] and will appear so to you when you see her, as I am afraid you will, not looking much better, *much* more cheerful, than when you paid us your last visit. But when we are very *willing* to hope, we are apt to be too *ready* to hope: though really, without being *too* sanguine, we may consider quiet nights and diminished pain to be satisfactory signs of amendment. I know you will be glad to hear of them, and I hope you will *witness* them very

[1] Mrs. Browning usually spells such words as 'favour,' 'honour,' and the like, without the *u*, after the fashion which one is accustomed to regard as American.

soon, in spite of this repulsive snow. It will do mama good, and I am sure it will give us all pleasure, to benefit by some of your charitable pilgrimages over the hill.

With our best regards, and sincerest thanks for your kind interest,

Believe me, dear Mrs. Martin, most truly yours,

E. B. Barrett.

To Miss Commeline

Hope End, Monday, [October 1828].

My dear Miss Commeline, — Thank you for the sympathy and interest which you have extended towards us in our heavy affliction. Even *you* cannot know *all* that we have lost; but God knows, and it has pleased Him to take away the blessing that He gave. And all *must* be right since He doeth all! Indeed we did not foresee this great grief! If we had we could not have felt it less; but I should not then have been denied the consolation of being with her at the last.

It is idle to speak now of such thoughts, and circumstances have unquestionably been rightly and mercifully ordered. We are all well and composed — poor papa supporting us by his own surpassing fortitude. It is an inexpressible comfort to me to witness his calmness.

I cannot say that we shall not be glad to see you, but the weather is dreary and the distance long: and if you were to come, we might not be able to meet you and to speak to you with calmness. In that case you would receive a melancholy impression which I should like to spare you. Perhaps it would be better for you and less selfish in us, if we were to defer this meeting a little while longer — but do what you prefer doing! I can never forget the regard and esteem entertained for you by one whose tenderness and watchfulness I have felt every day and hour since she gave me that life which her loss embitters — whose memory is more precious to me than any earthly

blessing left behind! I have written what is ungrateful, and what I ought not to have written, and what I ought not to feel, and do not always feel, but I did not just then remember that I had so much left to love.

To Mrs. Boyd

Hope End: Saturday morning, [1828–1832].

My dear Mrs. Boyd, — You were quite wrong in supposing that papa was likely to complain about 'the number of letters from Malvern;' and as to my doing so, why did you suggest that? To fill up a sentence, or to conjure up some kind of limping excuse for idle people? Among idle people, perhaps you have written *me* down. But the reason of my silence was far more reasonable than yours. I have been engaged in alternately wishing in earnest and wishing in vain for the power of saying when I could go to Malvern — and in being unwell besides. For the last week I have not been at all well, and indeed was obliged yesterday to go to bed after breakfast instead of after tea, where I contrived to abstract myself out of a good deal of pain into Lord Byron's Life by Moore. To-day this abstraction is not necessary; I am much better; and, indeed, little remains of the indisposition but the *vulgar fractions* of a cough and cold. I dare say (and Occyta[1] agrees with me) cold was at the bottom of it all, for I was so very wise as to lie down upon the grass last Monday, when the sun was shining deceitfully, though the snow was staring at me from the hedges, with an expression anything but dog-daysical!

Henrietta's face-ache is quite well, and I don't mean to give any more bulletins to-day. I hope your 'tolerably well' is turned into 'quite well' too by this time.

In reply to your query, I will mention that *the existence* actually extended until Thursday without the visit here — a phenomenon in physics and metaphysics. I was desired by

[1] Octavius, her youngest brother.

a note a short time previously, 'to embrace all my circle with the utmost tenderness,' *as proxy*. Considering the extent of the said circle, this was a very comprehensive request, and a very unreasonable one to offer to anyone less than the hundred-armed Indian god Baly. I am glad that your alternative of a house is so near to the right side of the turnpike — in which case, a *miss* is certainly not as *bad* as a *mile*. May Place is to be vacated in May, though its present inhabitants do not leave Malvern. I mention this to you, but pray don't *re-mention* it to anybody. The rent is 150*l*. Mr. Boyd[1] will not be angry with me for not going to see him sooner than I can. At least, I am sure he ought not. Though you are all kind enough to wish me to go, I always think and know (which is consolatory to everything but my vanity) that no one can wish it half as much as I myself do.

Believe me, dear Mrs. Boyd, affectionately yours,

E. B. Barrett.

The year 1832 brought a great change in the fortunes of the Barrett family, and may be said to mark the end of the purely formative period in Elizabeth Barrett's life. Hitherto she had been living in the home and among the surroundings of her childhood, absorbing literature rather than producing it; or if producing it, still mainly for her own amusement and instruction, rather than with any view of appealing to the general public. But in 1832 this home

[1] Hugh Stuart Boyd, the blind scholar whose friendship with Elizabeth Barrett is commemorated in her poem, 'Wine of Cyprus,' and in three sonnets expressly addressed to him. He was at this time living at Great Malvern, where Miss Barrett frequently visited him, reading and discussing Greek literature with him, especially the works of the Greek Christian Fathers. But to call him her tutor, as has more than once been done, is a mistake: see Miss Barrett's letter to him of March 3, 1845. Her knowledge of Greek was due to her volunteering to share her brother Edward's work under his tutor, Mr. MacSwiney.

was broken up by the sale of Hope End,[1] and with the removal thence we seem to find her embarking definitely on literature as the avowed pursuit and occupation of her life. Sidmouth in Devonshire was the place to which the Barrett family now removed, and the letters begin henceforth to be longer and more frequent, and to tell a more connected tale.

To Mrs. Martin

[Sidmouth: September 1832.]

How can I thank you enough, dearest Mrs. Martin, for your letter? How kind of you to write so soon and so very kindly! The postmark and handwriting were in themselves pleasant sights to me, and the kindness yet more welcome. Believe that I am grateful to you for *all* your kindness — for your kindness now, and your kindness in the days which are past. Some of those past days were very happy, and some of them very sorrowful — more sorrowful than even our last days at dear, dear Hope End. *Then*, I well recollect, though I could not then thank you as I ought, how you felt *for* us and *with* us. Do not think I can ever forget *that time*, or *you*. I had written a note to you, which the bearer of Bummy's and Arabel's to Colwall[2] omitted to take. Afterwards I thought it best to spare you any more farewells, which are upon human lips, of all words, the most natural, and of all the most painful.

They told us of our having past your carriage in Ledbury. Dear Mrs. Martin, I cannot dwell upon the pain of that first hour of our journey; but you will know what it must have been. The dread of it, for some hours

[1] Mr. Ingram, in his *Life of E. B. Browning* ('Eminent Women' Series) connects this fact with the abolition of colonial slavery, and a consequent decrease in Mr. Barrett's income; but since the abolition only took place in 1833, while Hope End was given up in the preceding year, this conclusion does not appear to be certain.

[2] The Martins' home near Malvern, about a mile from Hope End.

before, was almost worse; but it is all over now, blessed be God. Before the first day's journey was at end, we felt inexpressibly relieved — relieved from the restlessness and anxiety which have so long oppressed us — and now we are calmer and happier than we have been for very long. If we could only have papa and Bro and Sette[1] with us! About half an hour before we set off, papa found out that he *could not* part with Sette, who sleeps with him, and is always an amusing companion to him. Papa was, however, unwilling to separate him perforce from his little playfellows, and asked him whether he wished very much to go. Sette's heart was quite full, but he answered immediately, 'Oh, no, papa, I would *much* rather stay with *you*.' He is a dear affectionate little thing. He and Bro being with poor Papa, we are far more comfortable about him than we should otherwise be — and perhaps our going was his sharpest pang. I hope it was, as it is over. Do not think, dear Mrs. Martin, that you or Mr. Martin can ever 'intrude' — you know you use that word in your letter. I have often been afraid, on account of papa not having been for so long a time at Colwall, lest you should fancy that he did not value your society and your kindness. Do not fancy it. Painful circumstances produce — as we have often had occasion to observe — different effects upon different minds; and some feeling, with which I certainly have no sympathy, has made papa shrink from society of any kind lately. He would not even attend the religious societies in Ledbury, which he was so much pledged to support, and so interested in supporting. If you knew how much he has talked of you, and asked every particular about you, you could not fancy that his regard for you was estranged. He has an extraordinary degree of strength of mind on most points — and strong feeling, when it is not allowed to run in the natural channel, will sometimes force its way where it is not expected. You will think it strange; but never up to

[1] Her brothers Edward and Septimus.

this moment has he even alluded to the subject, before *us* — never, at the moment of parting with us. And yet, though he had not the power to say *one word*, he could play at cricket with the boys on the very last evening.

We slept at the York House in Bath. Bath is a beautiful town *as a town*, and the country harmonises well with it, without being a beautiful country. As *mere country*, nobody would stand still to look at it; though as town country, many bodies would. Somersetshire in general seems to be hideous, and I could fancy from the walls which intersect it in every direction, that they had been turned to stone by looking at the *Gorgonic* scenery. The part of Devonshire through which our journey lay is nothing *very* pretty, though it must be allowed to be beautiful after Somersetshire. We arrived here almost in the dark, and were besieged by the crowd of disinterested tradespeople, who *would* attend us through the town to our house, to help to unload the carriages. This was not a particularly agreeable reception in spite of its cordiality; and the circumstance of there being not a human being in our house, and not even a rushlight burning, did not reassure us. People were tired of expecting us every day for three weeks. Nearly the whole way from Honiton to this place is a descent. Poor dear Bummy said she thought we were going into 'the *bowels of the earth*,' but *I* suspect she thought we were going much deeper. Between you and me, she does not seem *delighted* with Sidmouth; but her spirits are a great deal better, and in time she will, I dare say, be better pleased. *We* like very much what we have seen of it. The town is small and not superfluously clean, but, of course, the respectable houses are not a part of the town. Ours is one which the Grand Duchess Helena had, not at all *grand*, but extremely comfortable and cheerful, with a splendid sea view in front, and pleasant green hills and trees behind. The drawing-room's four windows all look to the sea, and I am never tired of looking out of

them. I was doing so, with a most hypocritical book before me, when your letter arrived, and I *felt* all that you said in it. I always thought that the sea was the sublimest object in nature. Mont Blanc — Niagara must be nothing to it. *There*, the Almighty's form glasses itself in tempests — and not only in tempests, but in calm — in space, in eternal motion, in eternal regularity. How can we look at it, and consider our puny sorrows, and not say, 'We are dumb — because *Thou* didst it'? Indeed, dear Mrs. Martin, we must feel every hour, and we shall feel every year, that what He did is *well done* — and not only well, but mercifully.

Mr. and Mrs. H——, with whom papa is slightly acquainted, have called upon us, and shown us many kind attentions. They are West India people, not very polished, but certainly *very* good-natured. We hear that the place is extremely full and gay; but this is, of course, only an *on dit* to us at present. I have been riding a donkey two or three times, and enjoy very much going to the edge of the sea. The air has made me sleep more soundly than I have done for some time, and I dare say it will do me a great deal of good in every way. . . .

You may suppose what a southern climate this is, when I tell you that myrtles and verbena, three or four feet high, and hydrangeas are in flower in the gardens — even in ours, which is about a hundred and fifty yards from the sea. I have written to the end of my paper. Give our kindest regards to Mr. Martin, and ever believe me,

Your affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

[Sidmouth:] Wednesday, September 27, 1832 [postmark].

How very kind of you, dearest Mrs. Martin, to write to me so much at length and at such a time. Indeed, it was exactly the time when, if we were where we have been, we

should have wished you to walk over the hill and talk to us; and although, after all that the most zealous friends of letter writing can say for it, it is *not* such a happy thing as talking with those you care for, yet it is the next happiest thing. I am sure I thought so when I read your letter. . . .

And now I must tell you about ourselves. Papa and Bro and Sette have made us so much happier by coming, and we have the comfort of seeing dear papa in good spirits, and not only satisfied but pleased with this place. It is scarcely possible, at least it seems so to me, to do otherwise than admire the beauty of the country. It is the very land of green lanes and pretty thatched cottages. I don't mean the kind of cottages which are generally thatched, with pigstyes and cabbages and dirty children, but thatched cottages with verandas and shrubberies, and sounds from the harp or piano coming through the windows. When you stand upon any of the hills which stand round Sidmouth, the whole valley seems to be thickly wooded down to the very verge of the sea, and these pretty villas to be springing from the ground almost as thickly and quite as naturally as the trees themselves. There are certainly many more houses out of the town than in it, and they all stand apart, yet near, hiding in their own shrubberies, or behind the green rows of elms which wall in the secluded lanes on either side. Such a number of green lanes I never saw; some of them quite black with foliage, where it is twilight in the middle of the day, and others letting in beautiful glimpses of the spreading heathy hills or of the sunny sea. I am sure you would like the transition from the cliffs, from the bird's eye view to, I was going to say, the mole's eye view, but I believe moles don't see quite clearly enough to suit my purpose. There are a great number of people here. Sam was at an evening party a week ago where there were a hundred and twenty people; but they don't walk about the parade and show themselves as one might expect. *We* know only the Herrings and Mrs. and the Miss Polands and Sir John Kean. Mrs. and

Miss Weekes, and Mr. and Mrs. James have called upon us, but we were out when they came. I suppose it will be necessary to return their visits and to know them; and when we do, you shall hear about them, and about everybody whom we know. I am certainly much better in health, stronger than I was, and less troubled with the cough. Every day I attend [*word torn out*] their walks on my donkey, if we do not go in a boat, which is still pleasanter. I believe Henrietta walks out about *three* times a day. She is looking particularly well, and often talks, and I am sure still oftener thinks, of you. You know how fond of you she is. Papa walks out with her — and *us;* and we all, down to Occyta, breakfast and drink tea together. The dining takes place at five o'clock. To-morrow, if this lovely weather will stand still and be accommodating, we talk of rowing to Dawlish, which is about ten miles off. We have had a few cases of cholera, at least *suspicious* cases: one a fortnight before we arrived, and five since, in the course of a month. All dead except one. I confess a little nervousness; but it is wearing away. The disease does not seem to make any progress; and for the last six days there have been no patients at all.

Do let us hear very soon, my dear Mrs. Martin, how you are — how your spirits are, and whether Rome is still in your distance. Surely no plan could be more delightful for you than this plan; and if you don't stay *very* long away, I shall be sorry to hear of your abandoning it. Do you recollect your promise of coming to see us? *We* do.

You must have had quite enough now of my 'little hand' and of my details. Do not go to Matton or to the Bartons or to Eastnor without giving my love. How often my thoughts are at *home!* I cannot help calling it so still in my thoughts. I may like other places, but no other place can ever appear to me to deserve that name.

Dearest Mrs. Martin's affectionate

E. B. BARRETT.

To Mrs. Martin

Sidmouth: December 14, 1832.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I hope you are very angry indeed with us for not writing. We are as penitent as we ought to be — that is, *I* am, for I believe I am the idle person; yet not altogether idle, but procrastinating and waiting for news rather more worthy of being read in Rome than any which even now I can send you. . . . And now, my dear Mrs. Martin, I mean to thank you, as I ought to have done long ago, for your kindness in offering to procure for me the Archbishop of Dublin's[1] valuable opinion upon my 'Prometheus.' I am sure that if you have not thought me very ungrateful, you must be very indulgent. My mind was at one time so crowded by painful thoughts, that they shut out many others which are interesting to me; and among other things, I forgot once or twice, when I had an opportunity, to thank *you*, dear Mrs. Martin. I believe I should have taken advantage of your proposal, but papa said to me, 'If he criticises your manuscript in a manner which does not satisfy you, you won't be easy without defending yourself, and he might be drawn into taking more trouble than you have now any idea of giving him.' I sighed a little at losing such an opportunity of gaining a great advantage, but there seemed to be some reason in what papa said. I have completed a preface and notes to my translation; and since doing so, a work of exactly the same character by a Mr. Medwin has been published, and commended in Bulwer's magazine.[2] Therefore it is probable enough that my trouble, excepting as far as my own amusement went, has been in vain. But papa means to try Mr. Valpy, I believe. He left us since I began to write this letter, with a promise of returning before

[1] Archbishop Whately.

[2] *The New Monthly Magazine*, at this time edited by Bulwer, afterwards the first Lord Lytton.

Christmas Day. We *do* miss him. Mr. Boyd has made me quite angry by publishing his translations by rotation in numbers of the 'Wesleyan Magazine,' instead of making them up into a separate publication, as I had persuaded him to do. There is the effect, you see, of going, even for a time, out of my reach! The readers of the 'Wesleyan Magazine' are pious people, but not cultivated, nor, for the most part, capable of estimating either the talents of Gregory or his translator's. I have begun already to *insist* upon another publication in a separate form, and shall gain my point, I dare say. I have been reading Bulwer's novels and Mrs. Trollope's libels, and Dr. Parr's works. I am sure *you* are not an admirer of Mrs. Trollope's. She has neither the delicacy nor the candour which constitute true nobility of mind, and her extent of talent forms but a scanty veil to shadow her other defects. Bulwer has quite delighted me. He has all the dramatic talent which Scott has, and all the passion which Scott has not, and he appears to me to be besides a far profounder discriminator of character. There are very fine things in his 'Denounced.'[1] We subscribe to the best library here, but the best is not a good one. I have, however, a table-load of my own books, and with them I can always be satisfied. Do you know that Mr. Curzon has left Ledbury? We were glad to receive your letter from Dover, although it told us that you were removing so far from us. Do let us hear of your enjoying Italy. Is there much English society in Rome, and is it like English society here? I can scarcely fancy an invitation card, 'Mrs. Huggin-muggin at home,' carried through the *Via Sacra*. I am sure my 'little hand' has done its duty to-day. I shall leave the corners to Henrietta. Give our kindest regards to Mr. Martin, and ever believe me, my dear Mrs. Martin,

Your affectionate

E. B. B.

[1] Evidently a slip of the memory for 'Disowned.'

The letter just printed contains the first allusion in Miss Barrett's letters to any of her own writings. The translation of the 'Prometheus Bound' of Æschylus was the first-fruits of the removal to Sidmouth. It was written, as she told Horne eleven years afterwards, 'in twelve days, and should have been thrown into the fire afterwards — the only means of giving it a little warmth.'[1] Indeed, so dissatisfied did she subsequently become with it, that she did what she could to suppress it, and in the collected edition of 1850 substituted another version, written in 1845, which she hoped would secure the final oblivion of her earlier attempt.[2] The letter given above shows that the composition of the earlier version took place at the end of 1832; and in the following year it was published by Mr. Valpy, along with some shorter poems, of which Miss Barrett subsequently wrote that 'a few of the fugitive poems may be worth a little, perhaps; but they have not so much goodness as to overcome the badness of the blasphemy of Æschylus.' The volume, which was published anonymously, received two sentences of contemptuous notice from the 'Athenæum,' in which the reviewer advised 'those who adventure in the hazardous lists of poetic translation to touch anyone rather than Æschylus, and they may take warning by the author before us.'[3]

To Mrs. Martin

Sidmouth: May 27, 1833.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am half afraid of your being very angry indeed with me; and perhaps it would be quite as well to spare this sheet of paper an angry look of yours, by consigning it over to Henrietta. Yet do believe me,

[1] *Letters to R. H. Horne*, i. 162.

[2] It need hardly be said that the literary resurrectionist has been too much for her, and the version of 1833 has recently been reprinted. Of this reprint the best that can be said is that it provides an occasion for an essay by Mrs. Meynell.

[3] *Athenæum*, June 8, 1833.

I have been anxious to write to you a long time, and did not know where to direct my letter. The history of all my unkindness to you is this: I delayed answering your kind welcome letter from Rome, for three weeks, because Henrietta was at Torquay, and I knew that she would like to write in it, and because I was unreasonable enough to expect to hear every day of her coming home. At the end of the three weeks, and on consulting your dates and plans, I found out that you would probably have quitted Rome before any letter of mine arrived there. Since then, I have been inquiring, and all in vain, about where I could find you out. All I could hear was, that you were somewhere between Italy and England; and all I could do was, to wait patiently, and throw myself at your feet as soon as you came within sight and hearing. And now do be as generous as you can, my dear Mrs. Martin, and try to forgive one who never *could* be guilty of the fault of forgetting you, notwithstanding appearances. We heard only yesterday of your being expected at Colwall. And although we cannot welcome you there, otherwise than in this way, at the distance of 140 miles, yet we must welcome you in this way, and assure both of you how glad we are that the same island holds all of us once more. It pleased us very much to hear how you were enjoying yourselves in Rome; and you must please us now by telling us that you are enjoying yourselves at Colwall, and that you bear the change with English philosophy. The fishing at Abbeville was a link between the past and the present; and would make the transition between the eternal city and the eternal tithes a little less striking. My wonder is how you could have persuaded yourselves to keep your promise and leave Italy as soon as you did. Tell me how you managed it. And tell me everything about yourselves — how you are and how you feel, and whether you look backwards or forwards with the most pleasure, and whether the influenza has been among your welcomers to England. Henrietta and Arabel

and Daisy[1] were confined by it to their beds for several days, and the two former are only now recovering their strength. Three or four of the other boys had symptoms which were not strong enough to put them to bed. As for me, I have been quite well all the spring, and almost all the winter. I don't know when I have been so long well as I have been lately; without a cough or anything else disagreeable. Indeed, if I may place the influenza in a parenthesis, we have all been perfectly well, in spite of our fishing and boating and getting wet three times a day. There is good trout-fishing at the Otter, and the noble river Sid, which, if I liked to stand in it, *might* cover my ankles. And lately, Daisy and Sette and Occyta have studied the art of catching shrimps, and soak themselves up to their waists like professors. My love of water concentrates itself in the boat; and this I enjoy very much, when the sea is as blue and calm as the sky, which it has often been lately. Of society we have had little indeed; but Henrietta had more than much of it at Torquay during three months; and as for me, you know I don't want any — though I am far from meaning to speak disrespectfully of *Mr. Boyd's*, which has been a pleasure and comfort to me. His house is not farther than a five minutes' walk from ours; and I often make it *four* in my haste to get there. Ask Eliza Cliffe to lend you the May number of the 'Wesleyan Magazine;' and if you have an opportunity of procuring last December's number, *do* procure *that*. There are some translations in each of them, which I think you will like. The December translation is my favourite, though I was amanuensis only in the May one. Henrietta and Arabel have a drawing master, and are meditating soon beginning to sketch out of doors — that is, if before the meditation is at an end we do not leave Sidmouth. Our plans are quite uncertain; and papa has not, I believe, made up his mind whether or not to take this house on after the beginning of next month, when our

[1] Alfred, the fifth brother.

engagement with our present landlord closes. If we do leave Sidmouth, you know as well as I do where we shall go. Perhaps to Boulogne! perhaps to the Swan River. The West Indians are irreparably ruined if the Bill passes. Papa says that in the case of its passing, nobody in his senses would think of even attempting the culture of sugar, and that they had better hang weights to the sides of the island of Jamaica and sink it at once. Don't you think certain heads might be found heavy enough for the purpose? No insinuation, I assure you, against the Administration, in spite of the dagger in their right hands. Mr. Atwood seems to me a demi-god of ingratitude! So much for the 'fickle reek of popular breath' to which men have erected their temple of the winds — who would trust a feather to it? I am almost more sorry for poor Lord Grey who is going to ruin us, than for our poor selves who are going to be ruined. You will hear that my 'Prometheus and other Poems' came into light a few weeks ago — a fortnight ago, I think. I dare say I shall wish it out of the light before I have done with it. And I dare say Henrietta is wishing me anywhere, rather than where I am. Certainly I have past *all bounds*. Do write soon, and tell us everything about Mr. Martin and yourself. And ever believe me, dearest Mrs. Martin,

Your affectionate

E. B. Barrett.

To Mrs. Martin

Sidmouth: September 7, 1833.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — are you a *little* angry *again*? I do hope not. I should have written long ago if it had not been for Henrietta; and Henrietta would have written very lately if it had not been for me: and we must beg of you to forgive us both for the sake of each other. Thank you for the kind letter which I have been so tardy in thanking you for, but which was not, on that account, the less gladly received. Do believe how much it pleases me *always* to

see and read dear Mrs. Martin's handwriting. But I must try to tell you some less ancient truths. We are still in the ruinous house. Without any poetical fiction, the walls are too frail for even *me*, who enjoy the situation in a most particularly particular manner, to have any desire to pass the winter within them. One wind we have had the privilege of hearing already; and down came the tiles while we were at dinner, and made us all think that down something else was coming. We have had one chimney pulled down to prevent it from tumbling down; and have received especial injunctions from the bricklayers not to lean too much out of the windows, for fear the walls should follow the destiny of the chimney. Altogether there is every reasonable probability that the whole house will in the course of next winter be as like Persepolis as anything so ugly can be! If another house which will fit us can be found in Sidmouth, I am sure papa will take it; but, as he said the other day, 'If I can't find a house, I must go.' I hope he may find one, and as near the sea as this ruin. I have enjoyed its moonlight and its calmness all the summer; and am prepared to enjoy its tempestuousness of the winter with as true an enjoyment. What we shall do ultimately, I do not even dream; and, if I know papa, *he* does not. My visions of the future are confined to 'what shall I write or read next,' and 'when shall we next go out in the boat,' and *they*, you know, can do no harm to anybody. Of one thing I have a comforting certainty — that wherever we may go or stay, the decree which moves or fixes us will and must be the 'wisest virtuousest discreetest best!' . . .

So, I will change the subject to myself. You told me that you were going to read my book, and I want to know what you think of it. If you were given to compliment and insincerity, I should be afraid of asking you; because, among other *evident* reasons, I might then appear to be asking for your praise instead of your opinion. As it is — I want to know what you think of my book. Is the trans-

lation stiff? If you know me at all (and I venture to hope that you do) you will be certain that I shall *like* your honesty, and love you for being honest, even if you put on the very blackest of black caps. . . .

Of course you know that the late Bill has ruined the West Indians. That is settled. The consternation here is very great. Nevertheless I am glad, and always shall be, that the negroes are — virtually — free!

May God bless you, dear Mrs. Martin!

Ever believe me, your affectionate

E. B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

Sidmouth: Friday [1834].

My dear Friend, — I don't know how I shall begin to persuade you not to be angry with me, but perhaps the best plan will be to confess as many sins as would cover this sheet of paper, and then to go on with my merits. Certainly I am altogether guiltless of your charge of not noticing your book's arrival because no Calvinism arrived with it. I told you the bare truth when I told you *why* I did not write immediately. The passage relating to Calvinism I certainly read, and as certainly was sorry for; but as certainly as both those certainties, such reading and such regret had nothing whatever to do with the silence which made you so angry with me.

The other particular thing of which I should have written is Mr. Parker and my letters. I am more and more sorry that you should have sent them to him at all — not that their loss is any loss to anybody, but that I scarcely like the idea — indeed, I don't like it at all — of their remaining, worthless as they are, at Mr. P.'s mercy. As for my writing about them, I should not be able to make up my mind to do *that*. You know I had nothing to do with their being sent to Mr. Parker, and was indeed in complete ignorance of it. Besides, I should be half

ashamed to write to him now on any subject. A very long interregnum took place in our correspondence, which was his own work; and when he wrote to me the summer before last, I delayed from week to week, and then from month to month, answering it. And now I feel ashamed to write at all.

Perhaps you will wonder why I am not ashamed to write to *you*. Indeed I have meant to do it very, very often. Don't be severe upon me. I am always afraid of writing to you too often, and so the opposite fault is apt to be run into — of writing too seldom. IF THAT IS a *fault*. You see my scepticism is becoming faster and faster developed.

Let me hear from you soon, if you are not angry. I have been reading the Bridgewater treatise, and am now trying to understand Prout upon Chemistry. I shall be worth something at last, shall I not? Who knows but what I may die a glorious death under the *pons asinorum* after all? Prout (if I succeed in understanding him) does not hold that matter is infinitely divisible; and so I suppose the seeds of matter — the ultimate molecules — are a kind of *tertium quid* between matter and spirit. Certainly I can't believe that any kind of matter, primal or ultimate, can be *indivisible*, which it must according to his view.

Chalmers's treatise is, as to eloquence, surpassingly beautiful; as to matter, I could not walk with him all the way, although I longed to do it, for he walked on flowers, and under shade — 'no tree on which a fine bird did not sit.' . . .

Believe me, your affectionate friend,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

Sidmouth: September 14, [1834].

My dear Mr. Boyd, — I won't ask you to forgive me for not writing before, because I know very well that you would rather have not heard from me immediately. . . .

And so, you and Mrs. Mathew have been tearing to pieces — to the very rags — all my elaborate theology! And when Mr. Young is 'strong enough,' he is to help you at your cruel work! 'The points upon which you and I differed' are so numerous, that if I really *am* wrong upon every one of them, Mrs. Mathew has indeed reason to 'punish me with hard thoughts.' Well, she can't help my feeling for her much esteem, although I never saw her. And if I *were* to see her, I would not argue with her; I would only ask her to let me love her. I am weary of controversy in religion, and should be so were I stronger and more successful in it than I am or care to be. The command is not 'argue with one another,' but 'love one another.' It is better to love than to convince. They who lie on the bosom of Jesus must lie there *together*!

Not a word about your book![1] Don't you mean to tell me anything of it? I saw a review of it — rather a satisfactory one — I think in an *August* number of the 'Athenæum.' If you will look into 'Fraser's Magazine' for August, at an article entitled 'Rogueries of Tom Moore,' you will be amused with a notice of the 'Edinburgh Review's' criticism in the text, and of yourself in a note. We have had a crowded Bible meeting, and a Church Missionary and London Missionary meeting besides; and I went last Tuesday to the Exmouth Bible meeting with Mrs. Maling, Miss Taylor, and Mr. Hunter. We did not return until half-past one in the morning. . . . The Bishop of Barbadoes and the Dean of Winchester were walking together on the beach yesterday, making Sidmouth look quite episcopal. You would not have despised it *half so much*, had you been here.

Do you know any person who would like to send his or her son to Sidmouth, for the sake of the climate, and private instruction: and if you do, will you mention it to me?

[1] *The Fathers not Papists*, including a reprint of some translations from the Greek Fathers, which Mr. Boyd had published previously.

I am very sorry to hear of Mrs. Boyd being so unwell. Arabel had a letter two days ago from Annie, and as it mentions Mrs. Boyd's having gone to Dover, I trust that she is well again. Should she be returned, give my love to her.

The black-edged paper may make you wonder at its cause. Our dear aunt Mrs. Butler died last month at Dieppe — and died *in Jesus*. Miss Clarke is going, if she is not gone, to Italy for the winter.

Believe me, affectionately yours,

E. B. BARRETT.

Write to me whenever you *dislike it least*, and tell me what your plans are. I hear nothing about our leaving Sidmouth.

To Miss Commeline

September 22, 1834 [Sidmouth].

I am afraid that there can be no chance of my handwriting at least being unforgotten by you, dear Miss Commeline, but in the case of your having a very long memory you may remember the name which shall be written at the end of this note, and which belongs to one who does not, nor is likely to forget you! I was much, *much* obliged to you for the kind few lines you wrote to me — how long ago! No, do not remember how long — do not remember *that* for fear you should think me unkind, and — what I am not! I have intended again and again to answer your note, and I am doing it — *at last!* Are you all quite well? Mrs. Commeline and all of you? Shall I ever see any of you again? Perhaps I shall not; but even if I do not, I shall not cease to wish you to be well and happy 'in the body or out of the body.'

We came to Sidmouth for two months, and you see we are here still; and when we are likely to go is as uncertain as ever. I like the place, and some of its inhabitants. I like

the greenness and the tranquillity and the sea; and the solitude of one dear seat which hangs over it, and which is too far or too lonely for many others to like besides myself.

We are living in a thatched cottage, with a green lawn bounded by a *Devonshire lane*. Do you know what that is? Milton did when he wrote of 'hedgerow elms and hillocks green.' Indeed Sidmouth is a nest among elms; and the lulling of the sea and the shadow of the hills make it a peaceful one. But there are no majestic features in the country. It is all green and fresh and secluded; and the grandeur is concentrated upon the ocean without deigning to have anything to do with the earth. I often often find my thoughts where my footsteps once used to be! but there is no use in speaking of that. . . .

Pray believe me, affectionately yours,

E. B. Barrett.

To Mrs. Martin

Sidmouth: Friday, December 19, 1834 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — . . . We have lately had deep anxiety with regard to our dear papa. He left us two months ago to do his London business: and a few weeks since we were told by a letter from him that he was ill; he giving us to understand that his complaint was of a rheumatic character. By the next coach, we were so daring (I can scarcely understand how we managed it) as to send Henry to him: thinking that it would be better to be scolded than to suffer him to be alone and in suffering at a London hotel. We were not scolded: but my prayer to be permitted to follow Henry was condemned to silence: and what was said being said emphatically, I was obliged to submit, and to be thankful for the unsatisfactory accounts which for many days afterwards we received. . . . I cannot help being anxious and fearful. You know he is *all* left to us — and that without him we should indeed be orphans and desolate. Therefore you may well know what feelings those are with which we

look back upon his danger; and forwards to any threatening of a return of it. . . . It may not be so. Do not, when you write, allude to my fearing about it. Our only feeling now should certainly be a deep feeling of thankfulness towards that God of all consolation Who has permitted us to know His love in the midst of many griefs; and Who while He has often cast upon us the sorrow and the shadow, has yet enabled us to recognise it as that 'shadow of the wings of the Almighty,' wherein we may 'rejoice.' We shall probably see our dear papa next week. At least we know that he is only waiting for strength and that he is already able to go out — I fear, not to *walk* out. Here we are all well. Belle Vue is sold, and we shall probably have to leave it in March: but I do not think that we shall do so before. Henrietta is still very anxious to leave Sidmouth altogether; and I still feel that I shall very much grieve to leave it: so that it is happy for us that neither is the *decider* on this point. I have often thought that it is happier *not* to do what one pleases, and perhaps you will agree with me — if you don't please at the present moment to do something very particular. And do tell me, dear Mrs. Martin, what you are pleasing to do, and what you are doing: for it seems to me, and indeed is, a long time since I heard of you and Mr. Martin *in detail*. Miss Maria Commeline sent a note to Henrietta a fortnight ago: and in it was honorable mention of you — but I won't interfere with the sublimities of your imagination, by telling you what it was. . . . I should like to hear something of Hope End: whether there are many alterations, and whether the new lodge, of which I heard, is built. Even now, the thought stands before me sometimes like an object in a dream, that I shall see no more those hills and trees which seemed to me once almost like portions of my existence. This is not meant for murmuring. I have had much happiness at Sidmouth, though with a character of its own. Henrietta and Arabel and I are the only guardians just now of the

three youngest boys, the only ones at home: and I assure you, we have not too little to do. They are no longer *little* boys. There is an anxiety among us just now to have letters from Jamaica — from my dear dear Bro — but the packet is only 'expected.' The last accounts were comforting ones; and I am living on the hope of seeing him back again in the spring. Stormie and Georgie are doing well at Glasgow. So Dr. Wardlaw says. . . . Henrietta's particular love to you; and *do* believe me always

Your affectionate
E. B. Barrett.

You have of course heard of poor Mrs. Boyd's death. Mr. Boyd and his daughter are both in London, and likely, I think, to remain there.

To H. S. Boyd

Sidmouth: Tuesday [spring 1835].

My dear Mr. Boyd, —. . . Now I am going to tell you the only good news I know, and you will be glad, I know, to be told what I am going to tell you. Dear Georgie has taken his degree, and very honorably, at Glasgow, and is coming to us in all the dignity of a Bachelor of Arts. He was examined in Logic, Moral Philosophy, Greek and Latin, of course publicly: and we have heard from a fellow student of his, that his answers were more pertinent than those of any other of the examined, and elicited much applause. Mr. Groube is the fellow student — but he has ceased to be one, having found the Glasgow studies too heavy for his health. Stormie shrank from the public examination, on account of the hesitation in his speech. He would not go up; although, according to report, as well qualified as Georgie. Mr. Groube says that the ladies of Glasgow are preparing to break their hearts for Georgie's departure: and he and Stormie leave Glasgow on May 1.

Now, I am sure you will rejoice with me in the result of the examination. Do you not, dear friend? I was very anxious about it; and almost resigned to hear of a failure — for Georgie was in great alarm and prepared us for the very worst. Therefore the surprise and pleasure were great.

I can't tell you of our plans; although the Glasgow students come to us in a week and this house will be too small to receive them. We may leave Sidmouth immediately, or not at all. I shall soon be quite qualified to write a poem on the 'Pleasures of *Doubt*' — and a very good subject it will be. The pleasures of certainty are generally far less enjoyable — I mean as pleasures go in this unpleasing world. Papa is in London, and much better when we heard from him last — and we are awaiting his decree. . . .

And now what remains for me to tell you? I believe I have read more Hebrew than Greek lately; yet the dear Greek is not less dear than ever. Who reads Greek to you? Who holds my office? Some one, I hope, with an articulation of more congenial slowness.

Give Annie my kind love. May God preserve both of you!

Believe me, your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

CHAPTER II

1835–1841

The residence of the Barretts at Sidmouth had never been a very settled one — never intended to be permanent, and yet never having a fixed term nor any reason for a fixed term. Hence it spread itself gradually over a space of nearly three years, before the long contemplated move to London actually took place. During the latter part of that period, however, extant letters of Miss Barrett are almost wholly wanting, and there is little information from any other source as to the course of her life. It was apparently in the summer of 1835 that Sidmouth was finally left behind, Mr. Barrett having then taken a house at 74 Gloucester Place (near Baker Street), which, though never regarded as more than a temporary residence, continued to be the home of his family for the next three years.

The move to London was followed by two results of great importance for Elizabeth Barrett. In the first place, her health, which had never been strong, broke down altogether in the London atmosphere, and it is from some time shortly after the arrival in Gloucester Place that the beginning of her invalid life must be dated. On the other hand, residence in London brought her into the neighbourhood of new friends; and although the number of those admitted to see her in her sick-room was always small, we yet owe to this fact the commencement of some of her closest friendships, notably those with her distant cousin,

John Kenyon, and with Miss Mitford, the authoress of 'Our Village,' and of a correspondence on a much fuller and more elaborate scale than any of the earlier period. To this, no doubt, the fact of her confinement to her room contributed not a little; for being unable to go out and see her friends, much of her communication with them was necessarily by letter. At the same time her literary activity was increasing. She began to contribute poems to various magazines, and to be brought thereby into connection with literary men; and she was also employed on the longer compositions which went to make up her next volume of published verse.

All this was, however, only of gradual development; and for some time her correspondence is limited to Mr. Boyd, who was now living in St. John's Wood, and Mrs. Martin. The exact date of the first letter is uncertain, but it seems to belong to a time soon after the arrival of the Barretts in town.

To H. S. Boyd

[74 Gloucester Place, London: autumn 1835.]

My dear Mr. Boyd, — As Georgie is going to do what I am afraid I shall not be able to do to-day — namely, to visit *you* — he must take with him a few lines from *Porsonia greeting*, to say how glad I am to feel myself again at only a short distance from you, and how still gladder I shall be when the same room holds both of us. Don't be angry because I have not visited you immediately. You know — or you *will* know, if you consider — I cannot open the window and fly.

Papa and I were very much obliged to you for the poison — and are ready to smile upon you whenever you give us the opportunity, as graciously as Socrates did upon his executioner. How much you will have to say to me about the Greeks, unless you begin first to abuse me about the *Romans;* and if you begin *that*, the peroration will be

a very pathetic one, in my being turned out of your doors. Such is my prophecy.

Papa has been telling me of your abusing my stanzas on Mrs. Hemans's death. I had a presentiment that you would: and behold, why I said nothing to you of them. Of course, I maintain, *versus* both you and papa, that they are very much to be admired: as well as everything else proceeding from or belonging to ME. Upon which principle, I hope you will admire George particularly.

Believe me, dear Mr. Boyd, your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

Arabel's and my love to Annie. Won't she come to see us?

To Mrs. Martin

74 Gloucester Place, Portman Square, London: Jan. 1, 1836.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am half willing and half unwilling to write to you when, among such dearer interests and deep anxieties, you may perhaps be scarcely at liberty to attend to what I write. And yet I *will* write, if it be only briefly, that you may not think — if you think of us at all — that we have changed our hearts with our residence so much as to forget to sympathise with you, dear Mrs. Martin, or to neglect to apprise you ourselves of our movements. Indeed, a letter to you should have been written among my first letters on arriving in London, only Henrietta (my scape-goat, *you* will say) said, '*I* will write to Mrs. Martin.' And then after I had waited, and determined to write without waiting any longer, we heard of poor Mrs. Hanford's affliction and your anxiety, and I have considered day after day whether or not I should intrude upon you; until I find myself — *thus!*

I do hope that you have from the hand of God those consolations which only He in Jesus Christ can give to the so afflicted. For I know well that you are afflicted with the afflicted, and that with you sympathy is suffering; and

that while the tenderest earthly comfort is administered by your presence and kindness to your dear friends, you will feel bitterly for them what a little thing earthly comfort is, when the earthly beloved perish before them. May He who is the Beloved in the sight of His Father and His Church be near to them and you, and cause you to *feel* as well as *know* the truth, that what is sudden sorrow, to our judgments, is only long-prepared mercy in *His* will whose names are *Wisdom* and *Love*. Should it not be, dear friend, that the tears of our human eyes ought to serve the happy and touching purpose of reminding us of those tears of Jesus which He shed in assuming our sorrow with our flesh? And the memory of those tears involves all comfort. A recognition of the oneness of the human nature of that Divine Saviour who ever liveth, with ours which perishes and sorrows so; an assurance drawn from thence of *His* sympathy who sits on the throne of God, with us who suffer in the dust of earth, and of all those doctrines of redemption and sanctification and happiness which come from Him and by Him.

Now you will forgive me for writing all this, dearest Mrs. Martin. I like to write my thoughts and feelings out of my own head and heart, just as they suggest themselves, when I write to you; and I cannot think of affliction, particularly when it comes near to me in the affliction or anxiety of dear friends, without looking back and remembering what voice of God used to sound softly to me when none other could speak comfort. You will forgive me, and not be angry with me for trying, or seeming to try, to be a sermon writer.

Perhaps, dear Mrs. Martin, when you do feel inclined and able to write, you would write me a few lines. Remember, I do not ask for them *now*. No, do not think of writing now. I shall very much like to hear how your dear charge is — whether there should appear any prospect of improvement; and how poor Mrs. Hanford bears up against this heavy calamity; and whether the anxiety and nursing affect your health. But we shall try to hear this from the

Biddulphs; and so do put me out of your head, except when its thoughts would dwell on those on earth who sympathise with you and care for you.

You see we are in London after all, and poor Sidmouth left afar. I am almost inclined to say 'poor us' instead of 'poor Sidmouth.' But I dare say I shall soon be able to see in my dungeon, and begin to be amused with the spiders. Half my soul, in the meantime, seems to have stayed behind on the sea-shore, which I love more than ever now that I cannot walk on it in the body. London is wrapped up like a mummy, in a yellow mist, so closely that I have had scarcely a glimpse of its countenance since we came. Well, I am trying to like it all very much, and I dare say that in time I may change my taste and my senses — and succeed. We are in a house large enough to hold us, for four months, at the end of which time, if the experiment of our being able to live in London succeed, I *believe* that papa's intention is to take an unfurnished house and have his furniture from Ledbury. You may wonder at me, but I wish that were settled *so*, and *now*. I am *satisfied* with London, although I cannot enjoy it. We are not likely, in the case of leaving it, to return to Devonshire, and I should look with weary eyes to another strangership and pilgrimage even among green fields that know not these fogs. Papa's object in settling here refers to my brothers. George will probably enter as a barrister student at the Inner Temple on the fifth or sixth of this month, and he will have the advantage of his home by our remaining where we are. Another advantage of London is, that we shall see here those whom we might see nowhere else. This year, dear Mrs. Martin, may it bring with it the true pleasure of seeing *you!* Three have gone, and we have not seen you. . . . May God bless you and all that you care for, being with you always as the God of consolation and peace. Your affectionate

E. B. Barrett.

It is from the middle of this year that Miss Barrett's active appearance as an author may be dated. Hitherto her publications had been confined to a few small anonymous volumes, printed rather to please herself and her friends than with any idea of appealing to a wider public. She was now anxious to take this farther step, and, with that object, to obtain admission to some of the literary magazines. This was obtained through the instrumentality of Mr. R. H. Horne, subsequently best known as the author of 'Orion.' He was at this time personally unknown to Miss Barrett, but an application through a common friend led both to the opening to the poetess of the pages of the 'New Monthly Magazine,' then edited by Bulwer, and also to the commencement of a friendship which has left its mark in the two volumes of published letters to Mr. Horne. The following is Mr. Horne's account of the opening of the acquaintance ('Letters,' i. 7, 8):

'My first introduction to Miss Barrett was by a note from Mrs. Orme, inclosing one from the young lady containing a short poem with the modest request to be frankly told whether it might be ranked as poetry or merely verse. As there could be no doubt in the recipient's mind on that point, the poem was forwarded to Colburn's "New Monthly," edited at that time by Mr. Bulwer (afterwards the late [first] Lord Lytton), where it duly appeared in the current number. The next manuscript sent to me was "The Dead Pan," and the poetess at once started on her bright and noble career.'

The poem with which Miss Barrett thus made her bow to the world of letters was 'The Romaunt of Margret,'[1] which appeared in the July number of the magazine. Mr. Horne must, however, have been in error in speaking of 'The Dead Pan' as its successor, since that was not written till some years later. More probably it was 'The Poet's Vow,'[2] which was printed in the October number of the 'New Monthly.'

[1] *Poetical Works*, ii. 3. [2] *Ib.* i. 277.

To H. S. Boyd

[London:] October 14, Friday [1836].

My dear Friend, — Be as little angry with me as you can. I have not been very well for a day or two, and shall enjoy a visit to you on Monday so much more than I shall be able to do to-day, that I will ask you to forgive my not going to you this week, and to receive me kindly on that day instead — provided, you know, it is not wet.

The Αχαιδες approach the Αχαιοι[1] more tremblingly than usual, with the 'New Monthly Magazine' in their hands. Now pray don't annoy yourself by reading a single word which you would rather not read except for the sake of being kind to me. And my prophecy is, that even by annoying yourself and making a *strenuous* effort, the whole force of friendship would not carry you down the first page. Georgie says you want to know the verdict of the 'Athenæum.' That paper unfortunately has been lent out of the house; but my memory enables me to send you the words very correctly, I think. After some observations on other periodicals, the writer goes on to say: 'The "New Monthly Magazine" has not one heavy article. It is rich in poetry, including some fine sonnets by the Corn Law Rhymer, and a fine although too dreamy ballad, "The Poet's Vow." We are almost tempted to pause and criticise the work of a writer of so much inspiration and promise as the author of this poem, and exhort him once again to greater clearness of expression and less quaintness in the choice of his phraseology; but this is not the time or place for digression.'

You see my critic has condemned me with a very gracious countenance. Do put on yours,

And believe me, affectionately yours,

E. B. BARRETT.

[1] Miss Barrett's Greek is habitually written without accents or breathings.

I forgot to say that you surprised and pleased me at the same time by your praise of my 'Sea-mew.'[1] Love to Annie. We were glad to hear that she did not *continue* unwell, and that you are well again, too. I hope you have had no return of the rheumatic pain.

To H. S. Boyd

[74 Gloucester Place:] Saturday, [October 1836].

My dear Friend, — I am much disappointed in finding myself at the end of this week without having once seen you — particularly when your two notes are waiting all this time to be answered. Do believe that they were not, either of them, addressed to an ungrateful person, and that the only reason of their being received *silently* was my hope of answering them more agreeably to both of us — by talking instead of writing.

Yes; you have read my mystery.[2]

You paid a tithe to your human nature in reading only *nine*-tenths of it, and the rest was a pure gift to your friendship for me, and is taken and will be remembered as such. But you have a cruel heart for a parody, and this one tried my sensibility so much that I cried — with laughing. I confess to you notwithstanding, it was *very fair*, and dealt its blow with a shining pointed weapon.

But what will you say to me when I confess besides that, in the face of all your kind encouragement, my Drama of the Angels[3] has never been touched until the last three days? It was *not* out of pure idleness on my part, nor of disregard to your admonition; but when my thoughts were distracted with other things, books just begun inclosing me all around, a whole load of books upon my conscience, I could not possibly rise up to the gate of heaven and write

[1] *Poetical Works*, ii. 278.

[2] An allusion to the first line of 'The Poet's Vow.'

[3] The 'Seraphim,' published in 1838.

about my angels. You know one can't sometimes sit down to the sublunary occupation of reading Greek, unless one feels *free* to it. And writing poetry requires a double liberty, and an inclination which comes only of itself.

But I have begun. I tried the blank metre once, and it *would not do*, and so I had to begin again in lyrics. Something above an hundred lines is written, and now I am in two panics, just as if one were not enough. First, because it seems to me a very daring subject — a subject almost beyond our sympathies, and therefore quite beyond the sphere of human poetry. Perhaps when all is written courageously, I shall have no courage left to publish it. Secondly, because all my tendencies towards mysticism will be called into terrible operation by this dreaming upon angels.

Yes; you *will* read a mystery,

but don't make any rash resolutions about reading anything. As I have begun, I certainly will go on with the writing.

Here is a question for you:

Am I to accept your generous sacrifice of reading nine-tenths of my 'Vow,' as an atonement for your WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN ME? Oh, your conscience will understand very well what I mean, without a dictionary.

Arabel and I intend to pay you a visit on Monday, and if we can, and it is convenient to you, we are inclined to invite ourselves to your dinner table. But this is all dependent on the weather.

Believe me, dear Mr. Boyd, your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

[74 Gloucester Place:] November 26, 1836 [postmark].

My dear Mr. Boyd, — I have been so busy that I have not been able until this morning to take breath or *inspiration* to answer your lyrics. You shall see me soon, but I am sorry to say it can't be Monday or Tuesday.

I have had another note from the editor of the 'New Monthly Magazine' — very flattering, and praying for farther supplies. The Angels were not ready, and I was obliged to send something else, which I will not ask you to read. So don't be very uneasy.

Arabel's and my best love to Annie. And believe me in a great hurry, for I won't miss this post,

Yours affectionately,

E. B. Barrett.

Your lyrics found me dull as prose
Among a file of papers,
And analysing London fogs
To nothing but the vapours.

They knew their part; but through the fog
Their flaming lightning raising;
They missed my fancy, and instead,
My choler set a-blazing.

Quoth I, 'I need not care a pin
For charge unjust, unsparing;
Yet oh! for ancient bodkin[1] keen,
To punish this *Pinddring*.

'Yet oh! that I, a female Jove,
These fogs sublime might float on,
Where, eagle-like, my dove might show
A very *υγρον νωτον*.[2]

'Then lightning should for lightning flash,
Vexation for vexation,
And shades of St. John's Wood should glow
In awful conflagration.'

I spoke; when lo! my birds of peace,
The vengeance disallowing,
Replied, 'Coo, coo!' But *keep in mind*,
That *cooing* is not *cowing*.[3]

[1] The bodkin seems to be a favourite weapon with ancient dames whose genius was for killing (note by E. B. B.).

[2] A reference to Pindar, *Pyth.* i. 9.

[3] These verses are inclosed with the foregoing letter, as a retort to Mr. Boyd's parody.

To Mrs. Martin

74 Gloucester Place: December 7, 1836.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Indeed I have long felt the need of writing to you (I mean the need to myself), and although so many weeks and even months have passed away in silence, they have not done so in lack of affection and thought.

I had wished very much to have been able to tell you in this letter where we had taken our house, or where we were going to take it. We remain, however, in our usual state of conscious ignorance, although there is a good deal of talking and walking about a house in Wimpole Street — which, between ourselves, I am not very anxious to live in, on account of the gloominesses of that street, and of that part of the street, whose walls look so much like Newgate's turned inside out. I would rather go on, in my old way, inhabiting castles in the air than that particular house. Nevertheless, if it *is* decided upon, I dare say I shall contrive to be satisfied with it, and sleep and wake very much as I should in any other. It will certainly be a point gained to be settled somewhere, and I do so long to sit in my own armchair — strange as it will look out of my own room — and to read from my own books. . . . For our own particular parts, our healths continue good — none of us, I think, the worse for fog or wind. As to wind, we were almost elevated into the prerogative of *pigs* in the late storm. We could almost *see* it, and the feeling it might have been fatal to us. Bro and I were moralising about shipwrecks, in the dining-room, when down came the chimney through the skylight into the entrance passage. You may imagine the crashing effect of the bricks bounding from the staircase downwards, breaking the stone steps in the process, in addition to the falling in of twenty-four large panes of glass, frames and all. We were terrified out of all propriety, and there has been a dreadful calumny about Henrietta and me — that we had

the hall door open for the purpose of going out into the street with our hair on end, if Bro had not *encouraged* us by shutting the door and locking it. I confess to opening the door, but deny the purpose of it — at least, maintain that I only meant to keep in reserve a way of escape, *in case*, as seemed probable, the whole house was on its way to the ground. Indeed, we should think much of the *mercy* of the escape. Bro had been on the staircase only five minutes before. Sarah the housemaid was actually there. She looked up accidentally and saw the nodding chimneys, and ran down into the drawing-room to papa, shrieking, but escaping with one graze of the hand from one brick. How did *you* fare in the wind? I never much imagined before that anything so true to nature as a real live storm could make itself heard in our streets. But it has come too surely, and carried away with it, besides our chimney, all that was left to us of the country, in the shape of the Kensington Garden trees. Now do write to me, dearest Mrs. Martin, and soon, and tell me all you can of your chances and mischances, and how Mr. Martin is getting on with the parish, and yourself with the parishioners. But you have more the name of living at Colwall than the thing. You seem to me to lead a far more wandering life than we, for all our homelessness and 'pilgrim shoon.' Why, you have been in Ireland since I last said a word to you, even upon paper. . . .

I sometimes think that a pilgrim's life is the wisest — at least, the most congenial to the 'uses of this world.' We give our sympathies and associations to our hills and fields, and then the providence of God gives *them* to another. It is better, perhaps, to keep a stricter *identity*, by calling only our thoughts our own.

Was there anybody in the world who ever loved London for itself? Did Dr. Johnson, in his paradise of Fleet Street, love the pavement and the walls? I doubt *that* — whether I ought to do so or not — though I don't doubt at

all that one may be contented and happy here, and love much *in* the place. But the place and the privileges of it don't mix together in one's love, as is done among the hills and by the seaside.

I or Henrietta must have told you that one of my privileges has been to see Wordsworth twice. He was very kind to me, and let me hear his conversation. I went with him and Miss Mitford to Chiswick, and thought all the way that I must certainly be dreaming. I saw her almost every day of her week's visit to London (this was all long ago, while you were in France); and she, who overflows with warm affections and generous benevolences, showed me every present and absent kindness, professing to love me, and asking me to write to her. Her novel is to be published soon after Christmas, and I believe a new tragedy is to appear about the same time, 'under the protection of Mr. Forrest.' Papa has given me the first two volumes of Wordsworth's new edition. The engraving in the first is his *own face*. You might think me affected if I told you all I felt in seeing the living face. His manners are very simple, and his conversation not at all *prominent* — if you quite understand what I mean by *that*. I do myself, for I saw at the same time Landor — the brilliant Landor! — and *felt* the difference between great genius and eminent talent. All these visions have passed now. I hear and see nothing, except my doves and the fireplace, and am doing little else than [*words torn out*] write all day long. And then people ask me what I *mean* in [*words torn out*]. I hope you were among the six who understood or half understood my 'Poet's Vow' — that is, if you read it at all. Uncle Hedley made a long pause at the first part. But I have been reading, too, Sheridan Knowles's play of the 'Wreckers.' It is full of passion and pathos, and made me shed a great many tears. How do you get on with the reading society? Do you see much or anything of Lady Margaret Cocks, from whom I never hear now? I promised to let her have 'Ion,' if I

could, before she left Brighton, but the person to whom it was lent did not return it to me in time. Will you tell her this, if you do see her, and give her my kind regards at the same time? Dear Bell was so sorry not to have seen you. If she had, you would have thought her looking *very* well, notwithstanding the thinness — perhaps, in some measure, on account of it — and in *eminent* spirits. I have not seen her in such spirits for very, very long. And there she is, down at Torquay, with the Hedleys and Butlers, making quite a colony of it, and everybody, in each several letter, grumbling in an undertone at the dullness of the place. What would *I* give to see the waves once more! But perhaps if I were there, I should grumble too. It is a happiness to them to be *together*, and that, I am sure, they all feel. . . .

Believe me, dearest Mrs. Martin, your affectionate

E. B. B.

Oh that you would call me Ba![1]

To H. S. Boyd

[74 Gloucester Place:]
Thursday, December 15, 1836 [postmark].

My dear Mr. Boyd. — . . . Two mornings since, I saw in the paper, under the head of literary news, that a change of editorship was taking place in the 'New Monthly Magazine;' and that Theodore Hook was to preside in the room of Mr. Hall. I am so much too modest and too wise to expect the patronage of two editors in succession, that I expect both my poems in a return cover, by every twopenny post. Besides, what has Theodore Hook to do with Seraphim? So, I shall leave that poem of mine to your imagination; which won't be half as troublesome to you as if I asked you

[1] Elizabeth Barrett's 'pet name' (see her poem, *Poetical Works*, ii. 249), given to her as a child by her brother Edward, and used by her family and friends, and by herself in her letters to them, throughout her life.

to read it; begging you to be assured — to write it down in your critical rubric — that it is the very finest composition you ever read, *next* (of course) to the beloved 'De Virginitate' of Gregory Nazianzen.[1]

Mr. Stratten has just been here. I admire him more than I ever did, for his admiration of my doves. By the way, I am sure he thought them the most agreeable of the whole party; for he said, what he never did before, that he could sit here for an hour! Our love to Annie — and forgive me for Baskettiring a letter to you. I mean, of course, as to size, not type.

Yours affectionately,

E. B. Barrett.

Is your poem printed yet?

To H. S. Boyd

[74 Gloucester Place:] Tuesday [Christmas 1836].

My dear Friend, — I am very much obliged to you for the *two* copies of your poem, so beautifully printed, with such 'majestical' types, on such 'magnifical' paper, as to be almost worthy of Baskett himself. You are too liberal in sending me more than one copy; and pray accept in return a duplicate of gratitude.

As to my 'Seraphim,' they are not returned to me, as in the case of their being unaccepted, I expressly begged they might be. Had the old editor been the present one, my

[1] Do you mind that deed of Até
Which you bound me to so fast, —
Reading 'De Virginitate,'
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That Saint Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?
'Wine of Cyprus' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 139).

inference would of course be, that their insertion was a determined matter; but as it is, I don't know what to think.[1] A long list of great names, belonging to *intending* contributors, appeared in the paper a day or two ago, and among them was Miss Mitford's.

Are you wroth with me for not saying a word about going to see you? Arabel and I won't affirm it mathematically — but we are, metaphysically, *talking* of paying our visit to you next Tuesday. Don't expect us, nevertheless.

Yours affectionately,

E. B. BARRETT.

What are my Christmas good wishes to be? That you may hold a Field in your right hand, and a Baskerville in your left, before the year is out! That degree of happiness will satisfy at least the *bodily* part of you.

You may wish, in return, for *me*, that I may learn to write rather more legibly than 'at these presents.'

Our love to Annie.

Won't you send your new poem to Mr. Barker, to the care of Mr. Valpy, with your Christmas benedictions?

To Mrs. Martin

[74 Gloucester Place:] January 23, 1837 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am standing in Henrietta's place, she says — but not, *I* say, to answer your letter to *her* yesterday, but your letter to *me*, some weeks ago — which I meant to answer much more immediately if the *ignis fatuus* of a house (you see to what a miserable fatuity I am reduced, of applying your pure country metaphors to our brick pollutions) had not been gliding just before us, and I had not much wished to be able to tell you of our settlement. As it is, however, I must write, and shall keep a

[1] As a matter of fact, 'The Seraphim' was not printed in the *New Monthly*, being probably thought too long.

solemn silence on the solemn subject of our shifting plans. . . .

No! I was not at all disappointed in Wordsworth, although perhaps I should not have singled him from the multitude as a great man. There is a *reserve* even in his countenance, which does not lighten as Landor's does, whom I saw the same evening. His eyes have more meekness than brilliancy; and in his slow even articulation there is rather the solemnity and calmness of *truth* itself, than the animation and energy of those who seek for it. As to my being quite at my ease when I spoke to him, why how could you ask such a question? I trembled both in my soul and body. But he was very kind, and sate near me and talked to me as long as he was in the room — and recited a translation by Cary of a sonnet of Dante's — and altogether, it was quite a dream! Landor too — Walter Savage Landor . . . in whose hands the ashes of antiquity burn again — gave me two Greek epigrams he had lately written . . . and talked brilliantly and prominently until Bro (he and I went together) abused him for *ambitious* singularity and affectation. But it was very interesting. And dear Miss Mitford too! and Mr. Raymond, a great Hebraist and the ancient author of 'A Cure for a Heartache!' I never walked in the skies before; and perhaps never shall again, when so many stars are out! I shall at least see dear Miss Mitford, who wrote to me not long ago to say that she would soon be in London with 'Otto,' her new tragedy, which was written at Mr. Forrest's own request, he in the most flattering manner having applied to her a stranger, as the authoress of 'Rienzi,' for a dramatic work worthy of his acting — after rejecting many plays offered to him, and among them Mr. Knowles's. . . . She says that her play will be quite opposed, in its execution, to 'Ion,' as unlike it 'as a ruined castle overhanging the Rhine, to a Grecian temple.' And I do not doubt that it will be full of ability; although my own opinion is that she stands higher as the authoress of 'Our

Village' than of 'Rienzi,' and writes prose better than poetry, and transcends rather in Dutch minuteness and high finishing, than in Italian ideality and passion. I think besides that Mr. Forrest's rejection of any play of Sheridan Knowles must refer rather to its unfitness for the development of his own personal talent, than to its abstract demerit, whatever Transatlantic tastes he may bring with him. The published title of the last play is 'The Daughter,' not 'The Wreckers,' although I believe it was acted as the last. I am very anxious to read 'Otto,' not to *see* it. I am not going to see it, notwithstanding an offered temptation to sit in the authoress's own box. With regard to 'Ion,' I think it is a beautiful work, but beautiful *rather* morally than intellectually. Is this right or not? Its moral tone is very noble, and sends a grand and touching harmony into the midst of the full discord of this utilitarian age. As dramatic *poetry*, it seems to me to want, not beauty, but power, passion, and condensation. This is my *doxy* about 'Ion.' Its author[1] made me very proud by sending it to me, although we do not know him personally. I have *heard* that he is a most amiable man (who else could have written 'Ion'?), but that he was a little *elevated* by his popularity last year! . . .

I have read Combe's 'Phrenology,' but not the 'Constitution of Man.' The 'Phrenology' is very clever, and amusing; but I do not think it logical or satisfactory. I forget whether 'slowness of the pulse' *is* mentioned in it as a symptom of the poetical æstus. I am afraid if it be a symptom, I dare not take my place even in the 'forlorn hope of poets,' in this age so forlorn as to its poetry; for my pulse is in a continual flutter and my feet not half cold enough for a pedestal — so I must make my honours over to poor papa straightway. He has been shivering and shuddering through the cold weather; and partaking our influenza in the warmer. I am very sorry that you should have been a sufferer too. It seems to have been a universal pestilence,

[1] Serjeant Talfourd.

even down in Devonshire, where dear Bummy and the whole colony have had their share of 'groans.' And one of my doves shook its pretty head and ruffled its feathers and shut its eyes, and became subject to pap and nursing and other infirmities for two or three days, until I was in great consternation for the result. But it is well again — cooing as usual; and so indeed we all are. But indeed, I can't write a sentence more without saying some of the evil it deserves of the utilitarianisms of this corrupt age — among some of the chief of which are steel pens!

I am so glad that you liked my 'Romaunt,' and so resigned that you did not understand some of my 'Poet's Vow,' and so obliged that you should care to go on reading what I write. They vouchsafed to publish in the first number of the new series of the 'New Monthly' a little poem of mine called 'The Island,'[1] but so incorrectly that I was glad at the additional oblivion of my signature. If you see it, pray alter the last senseless line of the first page into 'Leaf sounds with water, in your ear,' and put 'amreeta' instead of 'amneta' on the second page; and strike out '*of*' in the line which names Æschylus! There are other blunders, [but] these are intolerable, and cast me out of my 'contentment' for some time. I have begged for [proof] sheets in future; and as none have come for the ensuing month, I suppose I shall have nothing in the next number. They have a lyrical dramatic poem of mine, 'The Two Seraphim,' which, whenever it appears, I shall like to have your opinion of. As to the incomprehensible line in the 'Poet's Vow' of which you asked me the meaning, 'One making one in strong compass,' I meant to express how that oneness of God, 'in whom are all things,' produces a oneness or sympathy (sympathy being the tendency of many to become one) in all things. Do you understand? or is the explanation to be explained? The unity of God preserves a unity in men — that is, a perpetual sympathy

[1] *Poetical Works*, ii. 248.

between man and man — which sympathy we must be subject to, if not in our joys, yet in our griefs. I believe the subject itself involves the necessity of some mysticism; but I must make no excuses. I am afraid that my very Seraphim will not be thought to stand in a very clear light, even at heaven's gate. But this is much *asay* about nothing. . . .

The Bishop of Exeter is staying and preaching at Torquay. Do you not envy them all for making part of his congregation? I am sure *I* do *as much*. I envy you your before-breakfast activity. I am never a *complete man* without my breakfast — it seems to be some integral part of my soul. *You* 'read all O'Connell's speeches.' I never read any of them — unless they take me by surprise. I keep my devotion for *unpaid* patriots; but Miss Mitford is another devotee of Mr. O'Connell. . . .

Dearest Mrs. Martin's affectionate

E. B. BARRETT.

Thank you for the 'Ba' in Henrietta's letter. If you knew how many people, whom I have known only within this year or two, whether I like them or not, say 'Ba, Ba,' quite naturally and pastorally, you would not come to me with the detestable 'Miss B.'

To Mrs. Martin

London: August 16, 1837.

My dear Mrs. Martin, — It seems a long long time since we had any intercourse; and the answer to your last pleasant letter to Henrietta *must* go to you from me. We have heard of you that you don't mean to return to England before the spring — which news proved me a prophet, and disappointed me at the same time, for one can't enjoy even a prophecy in this world without something vexing. Indeed, I do long to see you again, dearest Mrs. Martin, and should always have the same pleasure in it, and affection for you, if my friends and acquaintances were as much multiplied as

you *wrongly* suppose them to be. But the truth is that I have almost none at all, in this place; and, except our relative Mr. Kenyon, not one literary in any sense. Dear Miss Mitford, one of the very kindest of human beings, lies buried in geraniums, thirty miles away. I could not conceive what Henrietta had been telling you, or what you meant, for a long time — until we conjectured that it must have been something about Lady Dacre, who kindly sent me her book, and intimated that she would be glad to receive me at her conversations — and you know me better than to doubt whether I would go or not. There was an equal unworthiness and unwillingness towards the honor of it. Indeed, dearest Mrs. Martin, it is almost surprising how we contrive to be as dull in London as in Devonshire — perhaps more so, for the sight of a multitude induces a sense of seclusion which one has not without it; and, besides, there were at Sidmouth many more known faces and listened-to voices than we see and hear in this place. No house yet! And you will scarcely have patience to read that papa has seen and likes another house in Devonshire Place, and that he *may* take it, and we *may* be settled in it, before the year closes. I myself think of the whole business indifferently. My thoughts have turned so long on the subject of houses, that the pivot is broken — and now they won't turn any more. All that remains is, a sort of consciousness, that we should be more comfortable in a house with cleaner carpets, and taken for rather longer than a week at a time. Perhaps, after all, we are quite as well *sur le tapis* as it is. It is a thousand to one but that the feeling of four red London walls closing around us for seven, eleven, or twenty-five years, would be a harsh and hard one, and make us cry wistfully to 'get out.' I am sure you will look up to your mountains and down to your lakes, and enter into this conjecture.

Talking of mountains and lakes is itself a trying thing to us poor prisoners. Papa has talked several times of taking us into the country for two months this summer, and

we have dreamt of it a hundred times in addition; but, after all, we are not likely to go I dare say. It would have been very delightful — and who knows what may take place next summer? We may not absolutely *die*, without seeing a tree. Henrietta has seen a great many. You will have heard, I dare say, of the enjoyment she had in her week at Camden House. She seems to have walked from seven in the morning to seven at night; and was quite delighted with the kindness within doors and the sunshine without. I assure you that, fresh as she was from the air and dew, she saluted us amidst the sentiment of our sisterly meeting just in this way — it was almost her first exclamation — 'What a very disagreeable smell there is here!' And this, although she had brought geraniums enough from Camden to perfume the Haymarket! . . .

I am happy to announce to you that a new little dove has appeared from a shell — over which nobody had prognosticated good — on August 16, 1837. I and the senior doves appear equally delighted, and we all three, in the capacity of good sitters and indefatigable pullers-about, take a good deal of credit upon ourselves. . . .

Arabel has begun oil painting, and without a master — and you can't think how much effect and expression she has given to several of her own sketches, notwithstanding all difficulties. Poor Henrietta is without a piano, and is not to have one again *until we have another house!* This is something like 'when Homer and Virgil are forgotten.' *Speaking of Homer and Virgil*, I have been writing a 'Romance of the Ganges,'[1] in order to illustrate an engraving in the new annual to be edited by Miss Mitford, Finden's tableaux for 1838. It does not sound a *very* Homeric undertaking — I confess I don't hold any kind of annual, gild it as you please, in too much honour and awe — but from my wish to please her, and from the necessity of its being done in a certain time, I was 'quite frightful,' as poor old Cooke used

[1] *Poetical Works*, ii. 83.

to say, in order to express his own nervousness. But she was quite pleased — she is very soon pleased — and the ballad, gone the way of all writing, now-a-days, to the press. I do wish I could send you some kind of news that would interest you; but you see scarcely any except all this selfishness is in my beat. Dearest Bro draws and reads German, and I fear is dull notwithstanding. But we are every one of us more reconciled to London than we were. Well! I must not write any more. Whenever you think of me, dearest Mrs. Martin, remember how deeply and unchangeably I must regard you — both with my *mind*, my *affections*, and that part of either, called my gratitude. Ba.

Henrietta's kindest love and thanks for your letter. She desires me to say that she and Bro are going to dine with Mrs. Robert Martin to-morrow. I must tell you that Georgie and I went to hear Dr. Chalmers preach, three Sundays ago. His sermon was on a text whose extreme beauty would diffuse itself into any sermon preached upon it — God is love. His eloquence was very great, and his views noble and grasping. I expected much from his imagination, but not so much from his knowledge. It was truer to Scripture than I was prepared for, although there seemed to me some *want* on the subject of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, which work we cannot dwell upon too emphatically. 'He worketh in us to will and to do,' and yet we are apt to will and do without a transmission of the praise to Him. May God bless you.

To Miss Commeline

London: August 19, 1837.

My dear Miss Commeline, — I could not hear of your being in affliction without very frequent thoughts of you and a desire to express some of them in this way, and although so much time has passed I do hope that you will

believe in the sympathy with which I, or rather *we*, have thought of you, and in the regard we shall not cease to feel for you even if we meet no more in this world. It is blessed to know both for ourselves and for each other that while there is a darkness that *must* come to all, there is a light which *may;* and may He who is the light in the dark place be with you [now] and always, causing you to feel rather the glory that is in Him than the shadow which is in all beside — that so the sweetness of the consolation may pass the bitterness of even grief. Do give my love to Mrs. Commeline and to your sisters, and believe me, all of you, that the friends who have gone from your neighbourhood have not gone from my old remembrance, either of your kindness to them, or of their own feelings of interest in you.

Trusting to such old remembrances, I will believe that you care to know what we are doing and how we are settling — that word which has now been on our lips for years, which it is marvellous to think how it got upon human lips at all. We came from Sidmouth to try London and ourselves, and see whether or not we could live together; and after more than a year and a half close contact with smoke we find no very good excuse for not remaining in it; and papa is going on with his eternal hunt for houses — the wild huntsman in the ballad is nothing to him, all except the sublimity — intending very seriously to take the first he can. He is now about one in particular, but I won't tell where it is because we have considered so many houses in particular that our considerations have come to be a jest in general. I shall be heartily glad, at least I *think* so, for it is possible that the reality of being bricked up for a lease time may not be very agreeable. I think I shall be heartily glad when a house is taken, and we have made it look like our own with our furniture and pictures and books. I am so anxious to see my old books. I believe I shall begin at the beginning and read every story book through in the joy of

meeting, and shall be as sedentary as ever I was in my own arm-chair. I remember when I was a child spreading my vitality, not over trees and flowers (I do that still — I still believe they have a certain animal susceptibility to pleasure and pain ; ' it is my creed,' and, being Wordsworth's besides, I am not ashamed of it), but over chairs and tables and books in particular, and being used to fancy a kind of love in them to suit my love to them. And so if I were a child I should have an intense pity for my poor folios, quartos, and duodecimos, to say nothing of the arm-chair, shut up all these weeks and months in boxes, without a rational eye to look upon them. Pray forgive me if I have written a great deal of nonsense — ' Je m'en doute.'

Henrietta has spent a fortnight at Chislehurst with the Martins, and was very joyous there, and came back to us with that happy triumphant air which I always fancy people 'just from the country' put on towards us hapless Londoners.

But you must not think I am a discontented person and grumble all day long at being in London. *There are many advantages here*, as I say to myself whenever it is particularly disagreeable ; and if we can't see even a leaf or a sparrow without soot on it, there are the parrots at the Zoological Gardens and the pictures at the Royal Academy ; and real live poets above all, with their heads full of the trees and birds and sunshine of paradise. I have stood face to face with Wordsworth and Landor ; and Miss Mitford, who is in herself what she is in her books, has become a dear friend of mine, but a distant one. She visits London at long intervals, and lives thirty miles away. . . .

Bro and I were studying German together all last summer with Henry, before he left us to become a German, and I believe this is the last of my languages, for I have begun absolutely to detest the sight of a dictionary or grammar, which I never liked except as a means, and love poetry with an intenser love, if that be possible, than I ever

did. Not that Greek is not as dear to me as ever, but I write more than I read, even of Greek poetry, and am resolute to work whatever little faculty I have, clear of imitations and conventionalisms which cloud and weaken more poetry (particularly now-a-days) than would be believed possible without looking into it. . . .

As to society in London, I assure you that none of us have much, and that as for me, you would wonder at seeing how possible it is to live as secludedly in the midst of a multitude as in the centre of solitude. My doves are my chief acquaintances, and I am so very intimate with *them* that they accept and even demand my assistance in building their innumerable nests. Do tell me if there is any hope of seeing any of you in London at any time. I say 'do tell me,' for I will venture to ask you, dear Miss Commeline, to write me a few lines in one of the idlest hours of one of your idlest days just to tell me a little about you, and whether Mrs. Commeline is tolerably well. Pray believe me under all circumstances,

Yours sincerely and affectionately,

E. B. Barrett.

The spring of 1838 was marked by two events of interest to Miss Barrett and her family. In the first place, Mr. Barrett's apparently interminable search for a house ended in his selection of 50 Wimpole Street, which continued to be his home for the rest of his life, and which is, consequently, more than any other house in London, to be associated with his daughter's memory. The second event was the publication of 'The Seraphim, and other Poems,' which was Miss Barrett's first serious appearance before the public, and in her own name, as a poet. The early letters of this year refer to the preparation of this volume, as well as to the authoress's health, which was at this time in a very serious condition, owing to the breaking of a blood-vessel. Indeed, from this time until her marriage in 1846 she held

her life on the frailest of tenures, and lived in all respects the life of an invalid.

To H. S. Boyd

Monday morning, March 27, 1838 [postmark].

My dear Friend, — I do hope that you may not be very angry, but papa thinks — and, indeed, I think — that as I have already *had* two proof sheets and forty-eight pages, and the printers have gone on to the rest of the poem, it would not be very welcome to them if we were to ask them to retrace their steps. Besides, I would rather — *I* for myself, *I* — that you had the whole poem at once and clearly printed before you, to insure as many chances as possible of your liking it. I am *promised* to see the volume completed in three weeks from this time, so that the dreadful moment of your reading it — I mean the 'Seraphim' part of it — cannot be far off, and perhaps, the season being a good deal advanced even now, you might not, on consideration, wish me to retard the appearance of the book, except for some very sufficient reason. I feel very nervous about it — far more than I did when my 'Prometheus' crept out [of] the Greek, or I myself out of the shell, in the first 'Essay on Mind.' Perhaps this is owing to Dr. Chambers's medicines, or perhaps to a consciousness that my present attempt *is* actually, and will be considered by others, more a trial of strength than either of my preceding ones.

Thank you for the books, and especially for the *editio rarissima*, which I should as soon have thought of your trusting to me as of your admitting me to stand with gloves on within a yard of Baxter. This extraordinary confidence shall not be abused.

I thank you besides for your kind inquiries about my health. Dr. Chambers did not think me worse yesterday, notwithstanding the last cold days, which have occasioned some uncomfortable sensations, and he still thinks I shall be better in the summer season. In the meantime he has

ordered me to take ice — out of sympathy with nature, I suppose; and not to speak a word, out of contradiction to my particular, human, feminine nature!

Whereupon I revenge myself, you see, by talking all this nonsense upon paper, and making you the victim.

To propitiate you, let me tell you that your commands have been performed to the letter, and that one Greek motto (from 'Orpheus') is given to the first part of 'The Seraphim,' and another from *Chrysostom* to the second.

Henrietta desires me to say that she means to go to see you very soon. Give my very kind remembrance to Miss Holmes, and believe me,

Your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

I saw Mr. Kenyon yesterday. He has a book just coming out.[1] I should like you to read it. If you would, you would thank me for saying so.

To John Kenyon[2]

[1838.]

Thank you, dearest Mr. Kenyon; and I should (and *shall*) thank Miss Thomson too for caring to spend a

[1] *Poems, for the most part occasional*, by John Kenyon.

[2] John Kenyon (1784-1856) was born in Jamaica, the son of a wealthy West Indian landowner, who came to England while quite a boy, and was a conspicuous figure in literary society during the second quarter of the century. He published some volumes of minor verse, but is best known for his friendships with many literary men and women, and for his boundless generosity and kindliness to all with whom he was brought into contact. Crabb Robinson described him as a man 'whose life is spent in making people happy.' He was a distant cousin of Miss Barrett, and a friend of Robert Browning, who dedicated to him his volume of 'Dramatic Romances,' besides writing and sending to him 'Andrea del Sarto' as a substitute for a print of the painter's portrait which he had been unable to find. The best account of Kenyon is to be found in Mrs. Crosse's 'John Kenyon and his Friends' (in *Red-Letter Days of My Life*, vol. i.).

thought on me after all the Parisian glories and rationalities which I sympathise with by many degrees nearer than you seem to do. We, in this England here, are just social barbarians, to my mind — that is, we know how to read and write and think, and even talk on occasion; but we carry the old rings in our noses, and are proud of the flowers pricked into our cuticles. By so much are they better than we on the Continent, I always think. Life has a thinner rind, and so a livelier sap. And *that* I can see in the books and the traditions, and always understand people who like living in France and Germany, and should like it myself, I believe, on some accounts.

Where did you get your Bacchanalian song? Witty, certainly, but the recollection of the *scores* a little ghastly for the occasion, perhaps. You have yourself sung into silence, too, all possible songs of Bacchus, as the god and I know.

Here is a delightful letter from Miss Martineau. I cannot be so selfish as to keep it to myself. The sense of natural beauty and the *good* sense of the remarks on rural manners, are both exquisite of their kinds, and Wordsworth is Wordsworth as she knows him. Have I said that Friday will find me expecting the kind visit you promise? *That,* at least, is what I meant to say with all these words.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To John Kenyon

Wimpole Street: Sunday evening [1838?].

My dear Mr. Kenyon, — I am *so* sorry to hear of your going, and I not able to say 'good-bye' to you, that — I am *not* writing this note on that account.

It is a begging note, and now I am wondering to myself whether you will think me very childish or womanish, or silly enough to be both together (I know your thoughts upon certain parallel subjects), if I go on to do my begging fully.

I hear that you are going to Mr. Wordsworth's — to Rydal Mount — and I want you to ask *for yourself*, and then to send to me in a letter — by the post, I mean, two cuttings out of the garden — of myrtle or geranium; I care very little which, or what else. Only I say 'myrtle' because it is less given to die, and I say *two* to be sure of my chances of saving one. Will you? You would please me very much by doing it; and certainly not *dis*please me by refusing to do it. Your broadest 'no' would not sound half so strange to me as my 'little crooked thing' does to you; but you see everybody in the world is fanciful about something, and why not *E. B. B.?*

Dear Mr. Kenyon, I have a book of yours — M. Rio's. If you want it before you go, just write in two words, 'Send it,' or I shall infer from your silence that I may keep it until you come back. No necessity for answering this otherwise. Is it as bad as asking for autographs, or worse? At any rate, believe me *in earnest* this time — besides being, with every wish for your enjoyment of mountains and lakes and 'cherry trees,'

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

[May 1838.]

My dear friend, — I am rather better than otherwise within the last few days, but fear that nothing will make me essentially so except the invisible sun. I am, however, a little better, and God's will is always done in mercy.

As to the poems, do forgive me, dear Mr. Boyd; and refrain from executing your cruel threat of suffering 'the desire of reading them to pass away.'

I have not one sheet of them; and papa — and, to say the truth, I myself — would so very much prefer your reading the preface first, that you must try to indulge us in our phantasy. The book Mr. Bentley half promises to finish the printing

of this week. At any rate it is likely to be all done in the next: and you may depend upon having a copy *as soon* as I have power over one.

With kind regards to Miss Holmes,

Believe me, your affectionate friend,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: Wednesday [May 1838].

Thank you for your inquiry, my dear friend. I had begun to fancy that between Saunders and Otley and the 'Seraphim' I had fallen to the ground of your disfavour. But I do trust to be able to send you a copy before next Sunday.

I am thrown back a little just now by having caught a very bad cold, which has of course affected my cough. The worse seems, however, to be past, and Dr. Chambers told me yesterday that he expected to see me in two days nearly as well as before this casualty. And I have been, thank God, pretty well lately; and although when the stethoscope was applied three weeks ago, it did not speak very satisfactorily of the state of the lungs, yet Dr. Chambers seems to be hopeful still, and to talk of the wonders which the summer sunshine (when it does come) may be the means of doing for me. And people say that I look rather better than worse, even now.

Did you hear of an autograph of Shakespeare's being sold lately for a very large sum (I *think* it was above a hundred pounds) on the credit of its being the only genuine autograph extant? Is yours quite safe? And are *you* so, in your opinion of its veritableness?

I have just finished a very long barbarous ballad for Miss Mitford and the Finden's tableaux of this year. The title is 'The Romaunt of the Page,'[1] and the subject not of my own choosing.

[1] *Poetical Works*, ii. 40.

I believe that you will certainly have 'The Seraphim' this week. Do macadamise the frown from your brow in order to receive them.

Give my love to Miss Holmes.

Your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

June 7, 1838 [postmark].

My dear Mr. Boyd, — Papa is scarcely inclined, nor am I for myself, to send my book or books to the East Indies. Let them alone, poor things, until they can walk about a little! and then it will be time enough for them to 'learn to *fly*.'

I am so sorry that Emily Harding saw Arabel and went away without this note, which I have been meaning to write to you for several days, and have been so absorbed and drawn away (all except my thoughts) by other things necessary to be done, that I was forced to defer it. My ballad,[1] containing a ladye dressed up like a page and galloping off to Palestine in a manner that would scandalise you, went to Miss Mitford this morning. But I augur from its length that she will not be able to receive it into Finden.

Arabel has told me what Miss Harding told her of your being in the act of going through my 'Seraphim' for the second time. For the feeling of interest in me which brought this labour upon you, I thank you, my dear friend. What your opinion *is*, and *will* be, I am prepared to hear with a good deal of awe. You will *certainly not approve of the poem*.

There now! You see I am prepared. Therefore do not keep back one rough word, for friendship's sake, but be as honest as — you could not help being, without this request.

If I should live, I shall write (*I believe*) better poems than

[1] 'The Romaunt of the Page.'

'The Seraphim;' which belief will help me to survive the condemnation heavy upon your lips.

Affectionately yours,

E. B. Barrett.

'The Seraphim, and other Poems,' a duodecimo of 360 pages, at last made its appearance at the end of May. At the time of its publication, English poetry was experiencing one of its periods of ebb between two flood tides of great achievement. Shelley, Keats, Byron, Scott, Coleridge were dead; Wordsworth had ceased to produce poetry of the first order; no fresh inspiration was to be expected from Landor, Southey, Rogers, Campbell, and such other writers of the Georgian era as still were numbered with the living. On the other hand, Tennyson, though already the most remarkable among the younger poets, was still but exercising himself in the studies in language and metrical music by which his consummate art was developed; Browning had published only 'Pauline,' 'Paracelsus,' and 'Strafford;' the other poets who have given distinction to the Victorian age had not begun to write. And between the veterans of the one generation and the young recruits of the next there was a singular want of writers of distinction. There was thus every opportunity for a new poet when Miss Barrett entered the lists with her first volume of acknowledged verse.

Its reception, on the whole, does credit alike to its own merits and to the critics who reviewed it. It does not contain any of those poems which have proved the most popular among its authoress's complete works, except 'Cowper's Grave;' but 'The Seraphim' was a poem which deserved to attract attention, and among the minor poems were 'The Poet's Vow,' 'Isobel's Child,' 'The Romaunt of Margret,' 'My Doves,' and 'The Sea-mew.' The volume did not suffice to win any wide reputation for Miss Barrett, and no second edition was called for; on the other hand, it was received with more than civility, with genuine cordiality, by

several among the reviewers, though they did not fail to note its obvious defects. The 'Athenæum'[1] began its review with the following declaration:

> This is an extraordinary volume — especially welcome as an evidence of female genius and accomplishment — but it is hardly less disappointing than extraordinary. Miss Barrett's genius is of a high order; active, vigorous, and versatile, but unaccompanied by discriminating taste. A thousand strange and beautiful views flit across her mind, but she cannot look on them with steady gaze; her descriptions, therefore, are often shadowy and indistinct, and her language wanting in the simplicity of unaffected earnestness.

The 'Examiner,'[2] after quoting at length from the preface and 'The Seraphim,' continued:

> 'who will deny to the writer of such verses as these (and they are not sparingly met with in the volume) the possession of many of the highest qualities of the divine art? We regret to have some restriction to add to an admission we make so gladly. Miss Barrett is indeed a genuine poetess, of no common order; yet is she in danger of being spoiled by over-ambition, and of realising no greater or more final reputation than a hectical one, like Crashaw's. She has fancy, feeling, imagination, expression; but for want of some just equipoise or other, between the material and spiritual, she aims at flights which have done no good to the strongest, and therefore falls infinitely short, except in such detached passages as we have extracted above, of what a proper exercise of her genius would infallibly reach. . . . Very various, and in the main beautiful and true, are the minor poems. But the entire volume deserves more than ordinary attention.

The 'Atlas,'[3] another paper whose literary judgments were highly esteemed at that date, was somewhat colder, and dwelt more on the faults of the volume, but added nevertheless that 'there are occasional passages of great beauty, and full of deep poetical feeling.' In 'The Romaunt of Margret' it detected the influence of Tennyson — a suggestion which Miss Barrett repudiated rather warmly; and it concluded with the declaration that the authoress 'possesses

[1] July 7, 1838. [2] June 24, 1838. [3] June 23, 1838.

a fine poetical temperament, and has given to the public, in this volume, a work of considerable merit.'

Such were the principal voices among the critical world when Miss Barrett first ventured into its midst; and she might well be satisfied with them. Two years later, the 'Quarterly Review'[1] included her name in a review of 'Modern English Poetesses,' along with Caroline Norton, 'V.,' and others whose names are even less remembered to-day. But though the reviewer speaks of her genius and learning in high terms of admiration, he cannot be said to treat her sympathetically. He objects to the dogmatic positiveness of her prefaces, and protests warmly against her 'reckless repetition of the name of God' — a charge which, in another connection, will be found fully and fairly met in one of her later letters. On points of technique he criticises her frequent use of the perfect participle with accented final syllable — 'kisséd,' 'bowéd,' and the like — and her fondness for the adverb 'very;' both of which mannerisms he charges to the example of Tennyson. He condemns the 'Prometheus,' though recognising it as 'a remarkable performance for a young lady.' He criticises the subject of 'The Seraphim,' 'from which Milton would have shrunk;' but adds, 'We give Miss Barrett, however, the full credit of a lofty purpose, and admit, moreover, that several particular passages in her poem are extremely fine; equally profound in thought and striking in expression.' He sums up as follows:

> In a word, we consider Miss Barrett to be a woman of undoubted genius and most unusual learning; but that she has indulged her inclination for themes of sublime mystery, not certainly without displaying great power, yet at the expense of that clearness, truth, and proportion, which are essential to beauty; and has most unfortunately fallen into the trammels of a school or manner of writing, which, of all that ever existed — Lycophron, Lucan, and Gongora not forgotten — is most open to the charge of being *vitiis imitabile exemplar*.

So much for the reception of 'The Seraphim' volume by

[1] September 1840.

the outside world. The letters show how it appeared to the authoress herself.

The first of them deserves a word of special notice because it is likewise the first in these volumes addressed to Miss Mary Russell Mitford, whose name holds a high and honourable place in the roll of Miss Barrett's friends. Her own account of the beginning of the friendship should be quoted in any record of Mrs. Browning's life.

'My first acquaintance with Elizabeth Barrett commenced about fifteen years ago.[1] She was certainly one of the most interesting persons that I had ever seen. Everybody who then saw her said the same; so that it is not merely the impression of my partiality or my enthusiasm. Of a slight, delicate figure, with a shower of dark curls falling on either side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes, richly fringed by dark eyelashes, a smile like a sunbeam, and such a look of youthfulness that I had some difficulty in persuading a friend, in whose carriage we went together to Chiswick, that the translatress of the "Prometheus" of Æschylus, the authoress of the "Essay on Mind," was old enough to be introduced into company, in technical language, was 'out.' Through the kindness of another invaluable friend,[2] to whom I owe many obligations, but none so great as this, I saw much of her during my stay in town. We met so constantly and so familiarly that, in spite of the difference of age,[3] intimacy ripened into friendship, and after my return into the country we corresponded freely and frequently, her letters being just what letters ought to be — her own talk put upon paper.'[4]

[1] This was written about the end of 1851.

[2] Probably John Kenyon, whom Miss Mitford elsewhere calls 'the pleasantest man in London;' he, on his side, said of Miss Mitford that 'she was better and stronger than any of her books.'

[3] Nineteen years, Miss Mitford having been born in 1787.

[4] *Recollections of a Literary Life*, by Mary Russell Mitford, p. 155 (1859).

Miss Barrett's letters show how warmly she returned this feeling of friendship, which lasted until Miss Mitford's death in 1855. Of the earlier letters many must have disappeared: for it is evident from Miss Mitford's just-quoted words, and also from many references in her published correspondence, that they were in constant communication during these years of Miss Barrett's life in London. After her marriage, however, the extant letters are far more frequent, and will be found to fill a considerable place in the later pages of this work.

To Miss Mitford

50 Wimpole Street: Thursday [June 1838].

We thank you gratefully, dearest Miss Mitford. Papa and I and all of us thank you for your more than kindnesses. The extracts were both gladdening and surprising — and the one the more for being the other also. Oh! it was *so* kind of you, in the midst of your multitude of occupations, to make time (out of love) to send them to us!

As to the ballad, dearest Miss Mitford, which you and Mr. Kenyon are indulgent enough to like, remember that he passed his criticism over it — before it went to you — and so if you did not find as many obscurities as he did in it, the reason is — *his* merit and not mine. But don't believe him — no! — don't believe even Mr. Kenyon — whenever he says that I am *perversely* obscure. Unfortunately obscure, not perversely — that is quite a wrong word. And the last time he used it to me (and then, I assure you, another word still worse was with it) I begged him to confine them for the future to his jesting moods. Because, *indeed*, I am not in the very least degree perverse in this fault of mine, which is my destiny rather than my choice, and comes upon me, I think, just where I would eschew it most. So little has perversity to do with its occurrence, that my fear of it makes me sometimes feel quite nervous and thought-tied in composition. . . .

I have not seen Mr. Kenyon since I wrote last. All last week I was not permitted to get out of bed, and was haunted with leeches and blisters. And in the course of it, Lady Dacre was so kind as to call here, and to leave a note instead of the personal greeting which I was not able to receive. The honor she did me a year ago, in sending me her book, encouraged me to offer her my poems. I hesitated about doing so at first, lest it should appear as if my vanity were dreaming of a *return;* but Mr. Kenyon's opinion turned the balance. I was very sorry not to have seen Lady Dacre and have written a reply to her note expressive of this regret. But, after all, this inaudible voice (except in its cough) could have scarcely made her understand that I was obliged by her visit, had I been able to receive it.

Dr. Chambers has freed me again into the drawing-room, and I am much better or he would not have done so. There is not, however, much strength or much health, nor any near prospect of regaining either. It is well that, in proportion to our feebleness, we may feel our dependence upon God.

I feel as if I had not said half, and they have come to ask me if I have not said *all!* My beloved friend, may you be happy in all ways!

Do write whenever you wish to talk and have no one to talk to nearer you than I am! *Indeed*, I did not forget Dr. Mitford when I wrote those words, although they look like it.

Your gratefully affectionate

E. B. Barrett.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: Wednesday morning [June 1838].

My dear Friend, — Do not think me depraved in ingratitude for not sooner thanking you for the pleasure, made so much greater by the surprise, which your note of

judgment gave me. The truth is that I have been very unwell, and delayed answering it immediately until the painful physical feeling went away to make room for the pleasurable moral one — and this I fancied it would do every hour, so that I might be able to tell you at ease all that was in my thoughts. The fancy was a vain one. The pain grew worse and worse, and Dr. Chambers has been here for two successive days shaking his head as awfully as if it bore all Jupiter's ambrosial curls; and is to be here again to-day, but with, I trust, a less grave countenance, inasmuch as the leeches last night did their duty, and I feel much better — God be thanked for the relief. But I am not yet as well as before this attack, and am still confined to my bed — and so you must rather imagine than read what I thought and felt in reading your wonderful note. Of course it pleased me very much, very very much — and, I dare say, would have made me vain by this time, if it had not been for the opportune pain and the sight of Dr. Chambers's face.

I sent a copy of my book to Nellie Bordman *before* I read your suggestion. I knew that her kind feeling for me would interest her in the sight of it.

Thank you once more, dear Mr. Boyd! May all my critics be gentle after the pattern of your gentleness!

Believe me, affectionately yours,

E. B. Barrett.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: June 17 [1838].

My dear Friend, — I send you a number of the 'Atlas' which you may keep. It is a favorable criticism, certainly — but I confess this of my vanity, that it has not altogether pleased me. You see what it is to be spoilt.

As to the 'Athenæum,' although I am *not* conscious of the quaintness and mannerism laid to my charge, and am very sure that I have always written too naturally (that is,

too much from the impulse of thought and feeling) to have studied '*attitudes*,' yet the critic was quite right in stating his opinion, and so am I in being grateful to him for the liberal praise he has otherwise given me. Upon the whole, I like his review better than even the 'Examiner,' notwithstanding my being perfectly satisfied with *that*.

Thank you for the question about my health. I am very tolerably well — for *me*: and am said to look better. At the same time I am aware of being always on the verge of an increase of illness — I mean, in a very excitable state — with a pulse that flies off at a word and is only to be caught by digitalis. But I am better — for the present — while the sun shines.

Thank you besides for your criticisms, which I shall hold in memory, and use whenever I am not particularly *obstinate*, in all my SUCCEEDING EDITIONS!

You will smile at that, and so do *I*.

Arabel is walking in the Zoological Gardens with the Cliffes — but I think you will see her before long.

Your affectionate friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

Don't let me forget to mention the Essays.[1] You shall have yours — and Miss Bordman hers — and the delay has not arisen from either forgetfulness or indifference on my part — although I never deny that I don't like giving the Essay to anybody because I don't like it. Now that sounds just like 'a woman's reason,' but it isn't, albeit so reasonable! I meant to say 'because I don't like the ESSAY.'

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: Thursday, June 21 [1838].

My dear Friend, — Notwithstanding this silence so ungrateful in appearance, I thank you at last, and very sincerely, for your kind letter. It made me laugh, and amused

[1] I.e. copies of the *Essay on Mind*.

me — and gratified me besides. Certainly your 'quality of mercy is not strained.'

My reason for not writing more immediately is that Arabel has meant, day after day, to go to you, and has had a separate disappointment for every day. She says now, '*Indeed*, I hope to see Mr. Boyd to-morrow.' But *I* say that I will not keep this answer of mine to run the risk of another day's contingencies, and that *it* shall go, whether *she* does or not.

I am better a great deal than I was last week, and have been allowed by Dr. Chambers to come down stairs again, and occupy my old place on the sofa. My health remains, however, in what I cannot help considering myself, and in what, I *believe*, Dr. Chambers considers, a very precarious state, and my weakness increases, of course, under the remedies which successive attacks render necessary. Dr. Chambers deserves my confidence — and besides the skill with which he has met the different modifications of the complaint, I am grateful to him for a feeling and a sympathy which are certainly rare in such of his profession as have their attention diverted, as his must be, by an immense practice, to fifty objects in a day. But, notwithstanding all, one breath of the east wind undoes whatever he labours to do. It is well to look up and remember that in the eternal reality these second causes are no causes at all.

Don't leave this note about for Arabel to see. I am anxious not to alarm her, or any one of my family: and it may please God to make me as well and strong again as ever. And, indeed, I am twice as well this week as I was last.

Your affectionate friend, dear Mr. Boyd,

E. B. Barrett.

I have seen an extract from a private letter of Mr. Chorley, editor of the 'Athenæum,'[1] which speaks *huge*

[1] This is an error. Mr. Chorley was not editor of the *Athenæum*, though he was one of its principal contributors.

praises of my poems. If he were to say a tithe of them in print, it would be nine times above my expectation!

To H. S. Boyd [June 1838.]

My dear Friend, — I begged your servant to wait — how long ago I am afraid to think — but certainly I must not make this note very long. I did intend to write to you to-day in any case. Since Saturday I have had my thanks ready at the end of my fingers waiting to slide along to the nib of my pen. Thank you for all your kindness and criticism, which is kindness too — thank you at last. Would that I deserved the praises as well as I do most of the findings-fault — and there is no time now to say more of *them*. Yet I believe I have something to say, and will find a time to say it in.

Dr. Chambers has just been here, and does not think me quite as well as usual. The truth is that I was rather excited and tired yesterday by rather too much talking and hearing talking, and suffer for it to-day in my *pulse*. But I am better on the whole.

Mr. Cross,[1] the great lion, the insect-making lion, came yesterday with Mr. Kenyon, and afterwards Lady Dacre. She is kind and gentle in her manner. She told me that she had 'placed my book in the hands of Mr. Bobus Smith, the brother of Sidney Smith, and the best judge in England,' and that it was to be returned to her on Tuesday. If I *should* hear the 'judgment,' I will tell you, whether you care to hear it or not. There is no other review, as far as I am aware.

Give my love to Miss Bordman. When is she coming to see me?

[1] Andrew Crosse, the electrician, who had recently published his observations of a remarkable development of insect life in connection with certain electrical experiments; a discovery which caused much controversy at the time, on account of its supposed bearings on the origin of life and the doctrine of creation.

The thunder did me no harm.

Your affectionate friend, in great haste, although your servant is not likely to think so, E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd [June 1838.]

My dear Friend, — You must let me *feel* my thanks to you, even when I do not *say* them. I have put up your various notes together, and perhaps they may do me as much good hereafter, as they have already, for the most part, given me pleasure.

The 'burden pure *have* been' certainly was a misprint, as certainly 'nor man nor nature satisfy'[1] is ungrammatical. But I am *not* so sure about the passage in Isobel:

> I am not used to tears at nights
> Instead of slumber — nor to prayer.

Now I think that the passage may imply a repetition of the words with which it begins, after 'nor' — thus — 'nor *am I used* to prayer,' &c. Either you or I may be right about it, and either 'or' or 'nor' may be grammatical. At least, so I pray.[2]

You did not answer one question. Do you consider that '*apolyptic*' stands without excuse?[3]

I never read Greek to any person except yourself and Mr. MacSwiney, my brother's tutor. To him I read longer than a few weeks, but then it was rather guessing and stammering and tottering through parts of Homer and extracts from Xenophon than reading. *You* would not have called it reading if you had heard it.

[1] Altered in later editions to 'satisfies.'

[2] In later editions 'not' is repeated instead of 'nor,' which looks like a compromise between her own opinion and Mr. Boyd's.

[3] The poem entitled 'Sounds,' in the volume of 1838, contained the line

> 'As erst in Patmos apolyptic John,'

presumably for 'apocalyptic.' This being naturally held to be 'without excuse,' the line was altered in subsequent editions to

> 'As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John.'

I studied hard by myself afterwards, and the kindness with which afterwards still you assisted me, if yourself remembers gladly *I* remember *gratefully* and gladly.

I have just been told that your servant was desired by you *not to wait a minute.*

The wind is unfavorable for the sea. I do not think there is the least probability of my going before the end of next week, if then. You shall hear.

Affectionately yours,

E. B. BARRETT.

I am tolerably well. I have been forced to take digitalis again, which makes me feel weak; but still I am better, I think.

In the course of this year the failure in Miss Barrett's health had become so great that her doctor advised removal to a warmer climate for the winter. Torquay was the place selected, and thither she went in the autumn, accompanied by her brother Edward, her favourite companion from childhood. Other members of the family, including Mr. Barrett, joined them from time to time. At Torquay she was able to live, but no more, and it was found necessary for her to stay during the summers as well as the winters of the next three years. Letters from this period are scarce, though it is clear from Miss Mitford's correspondence that a continuous interchange of letters was kept up between the two friends, and her acquaintanceship with Horne was now ripening into a close literary intimacy. A story relating to Bishop Phillpotts of Exeter, the hero of so many racy anecdotes, is contained in a letter of Miss Barrett's which must have been written about Christmas of either 1838 or 1839: —

'He [the bishop] was, however, at church on Christmas Day, and upon Mr. Elliot's being mercifully inclined to omit the Athanasian Creed, prompted him most episcopally from the pew with a "whereas;" and further on in the Creed, when the benign reader substituted the word *condem-*

nation for the terrible one — "Damnation!" exclaimed the bishop. The effect must have been rather startling.'

A slight acquaintance with the words of the Athanasian Creed will suggest that the story had suffered in accuracy before it reached Miss Barrett, who, of course, was unable to attend church, and whose own ignorance on the subject may be accounted for by remembering that she had been brought up as a Nonconformist. With a little correction, however, the story may be added to the many others on record with respect to 'Henry of Exeter.'

The following letter is shown, by the similarity of its contents to the one which succeeds it, to belong to November 1839, when Miss Barrett was entering on her second winter in Torquay.

To Mrs. Martin

Beacon Terrace, Torquay: November 24 [1839].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Henrietta *shall not* write to-day, whatever she may wish to do. I felt, in reading your unreproaching letter to her, as self-reproachful as anybody could with a great deal of innocence (in the way of the world) to fall back upon. I felt sorry, very sorry, not to have written something to you something sooner, which was a possible thing — although, since the day of my receiving your welcome letter, I have written scarcely at all, nor that little without much exertion. Had it been with me as usual, be sure that you should not have had any silence to complain of. Henrietta knew I wished to write, and felt, I suppose, unwilling to take my place when my filling it myself before long appeared possible. A long story — and not as entertaining as Mother Hubbard. But I would rather tire you than leave you under any wrong impression, where my regard and thankfulness to you, dearest Mrs. Martin, are concerned.

To reply to your kind anxiety about me, I may call myself decidedly better than I have been. Since October 1

I have not been out of bed — except just for an hour a day, when I am lifted to the sofa with the bare permission of my physician — who tells me that it is so much easier to make me worse than better, that he dares not permit anything like exposure or further exertion. I like him (Dr. Scully) very much, and although he evidently thinks my case in the highest degree precarious, yet knowing how much I bore last winter and understanding from him that the worst *tubercular* symptoms have not actually appeared, I am willing to think it may be God's will to keep me here still longer. I would willingly stay, if it were only for the sake of that tender affection of my beloved family which it so deeply affects me to consider. Dearest papa is with us now — to my great comfort and joy: and looking very well! — and astonishing everybody with his eternal youthfulness! Bro and Henrietta and Arabel besides, I can count as companions — and then there is dear Bummy! We are fixed at Torquay for the winter — that is, until the end of May: and after that, if I have any will or power and am alive to exercise either, I do trust and hope to go away. The death of my kind friend Dr. Bury was, as you suppose, a great grief and shock to me. How could it be otherwise, after his daily kindness to me for a year? And then his young wife and child — and the rapidity (a three weeks' illness) with which he was hurried away from the energies and toils and honors of professional life to the stillness of *that* death!

'*God's Will*' is the only answer to the mystery of the world's afflictions. . . .

Don't fancy me worse than I am — or that this bed-keeping is the result of a gradual sinking. It is not so. A feverish attack prostrated me on October 2 — and such will leave their effects — and Dr. Scully is so afraid of leading me into danger by saying, 'You may get up and dress as usual' that you should not be surprised if (in virtue of being the senior Torquay physician and correspondingly prudent) he

left me in this durance vile for a great part of the winter. I am decidedly better than I was a month ago, really and truly.

May God bless you, dearest Mrs. Martin! My best and kindest regards to Mr. Martin. Henrietta desires me to promise for her a letter to Colwall soon; but I think that one from Colwall should come first. May God bless you! Bro's fancy just now is painting in water colours and he performs many sketches. Do you ever in your dreams of universal benevolence dream of travelling into Devonshire?

Love your affectionate Ba,

— found guilty of egotism and stupidity 'by this sign' and at once!

To H. S. Boyd

1 Beacon Terrace, Torquay:
Wednesday, November 27, 1839.

If you can forgive me, my ever dear friend, for a silence which has not been intended, there will be another reason for being thankful to you, in addition to the many. To do myself justice, one of my earliest impulses on seeing my beloved Arabel, and recurring to the kindness with which you desired that happiness for me long before I possessed it, was to write and tell you how happy I felt. But she had promised, she said, to write herself, and moreover she and only she was to send you the ballad — in expectation of your dread judgment upon which I delayed my own writing. It came in the first letter we received in our new house, on the first of last October. An hour after reading it, I was upon my bed; was attacked by fever in the night, and from that bed have never even been lifted since — to these last days of November — except for one hour a day to the sofa at two yards' distance. I am very much better now, and have been so for some time; but my physician is so persuaded, he says, that it is easier to do me harm than good,

that he will neither permit any present attempt at further exertion, nor hint at the time when it may be advisable for him to permit it. Under the circumstances it has of course been more difficult than usual for me to write. Pray believe, my dear and kind friend, in the face of all circumstances and appearances, that I never forget you, nor am reluctant (oh, how could that be?) to write to you; and that you shall often have to pay 'a penny for my thoughts' under the new Postage Act — if it be in God's wisdom and mercy to spare me through the winter. Under the new act I shall not mind writing ten words and then stopping. As it is, they would scarcely be worth eleven pennies.

Thank you again and again for your praise of the ballad, which both delighted and *surprised* me . . . as I had scarcely hoped that you might like it at all. Think of Mr. Jilt's never sending me a proof sheet. The consequences are rather deplorable, and, if they had occurred to you, might have suggested a deep melancholy for life. In my case, *I*, who am, you know, hardened to sins of carelessness, simply look *aghast* at the misprints and mispunctuations coming in as a flood, and sweeping away meanings and melodies together. The annual itself is more splendid than usual, and its vignettes have illustrated my story — angels, devils and all — most beautifully. Miss Mitford's tales (in prose) have suffered besides by reason of Mr. Jilt — but are attractive and graphic notwithstanding — and Mr. Horne has supplied a dramatic poem of great power and beauty.

How I rejoice with you in the glorious revelation (about to be) of Gregory's second volume! The 'De Virginitate' poem will, in its new purple and fine linen, be more dazzling than ever.

Do you know that George is barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple — *is?* I have seen him gazetted.

My dearest papa is with me now, making me very happy of course. I have much reason to be happy — more to be grateful — yet am more obedient to the former than to the

latter impulse. May the Giver of good give gratitude with as full a hand! May He bless *you* — and bring us together again, if no more in the flesh, yet in the spirit!

Your ever affectionate friend,

E. B. Barrett.

Do write — when you are able and *least* disinclined.
Do you approve of Prince Albert or not?[1]

To H. S. Boyd

Torquay: May 29, 1840.

My ever dear Friend, — It was very pleasant to me to see your seal upon a letter once more; and although the letter itself left me with a mournful impression of your having passed some time so much less happily than I could wish and pray for you, yet there remains the pleasant thought to me still that you have not altogether forgotten me. Do receive the expression of my most affectionate sympathy under this and every circumstance — and I fear that the shock to your nerves and spirits could not be a light one, however impressed you might be and must be with the surety and verity of God's love working in all His will. Poor poor Patience! Coming to be so happy with you, with that joyous smile I thought so pretty! Do you not remember my telling you so? Well — it is well and better for her; happier for her, if God in Christ Jesus have received her, than her hopes were of the holiday time with you. The holiday is *for ever* now. . . .

I heard from Nelly Bordman only a few days before receiving your letter, and so far from preparing me for all this sadness and gloom, she pleased me with her account of you whom she had lately seen — dwelling upon your retrograde passage into youth, and the delight you were taking in the presence and society of some still more youthful,

[1] The engagement of Prince Albert to Queen Victoria took place in October 1839.

fair, and gay *monstrum amandum*, some prodigy of intellectual accomplishment, some little Circe who never turned anybodies into pigs. I learnt too from her for the first time that you were settled at Hampstead! Whereabout at Hampstead, and for how long? She didn't tell me *that*, thinking of course that I knew something more about you than I do. Yes indeed; you *do* treat me very shabbily. I agree with you in thinking so. To think that so many hills and woods should interpose between us — that I should be lying here, fast bound by a spell, a sleeping beauty in a forest, and that *you*, who used to be such a doughty knight, should not take the trouble of cutting through even a hazel tree with your good sword, to find out what had become of me! Now do tell me, the hazel tree being down at last, whether you mean to live at Hampstead, whether you have taken a house there and have carried your books there, and wear Hampstead grasshoppers in your bonnet (as they did at Athens) to prove yourself of the soil.

All this nonsense will make you think I am better, and indeed I am pretty well just now - quite, however, confined to the bed — except when lifted from it to the sofa baby-wise while they make it; even then apt to faint. Bad symptoms too do not leave me; and I am obliged to be blistered every few days — but I am free from any attack just now, and am a good deal less feverish than I am occasionally. There has been a consultation between an Exeter physician and my own, and they agree exactly, both hoping that with care I shall pass the winter, and rally in the spring, both hoping that I may be able to go about again with some comfort and independence, although I never can be fit again for anything like exertion. . . .

Do you know, did you ever hear anything of Mr. Horne who wrote 'Cosmo de Medici,' and the 'Death of Marlowe,' and is now desecrating his powers (I beg your pardon) by writing the life of Napoleon? By the way, he is the author of a dramatic sketch in the last Finden.

He is in my mind one of the very first poets of the day, and has written to me so kindly (offering, although I never saw him in my life, to cater for me in literature, and send me down anything likely to interest me in the periodicals), that I cannot but think his amiability and genius do honor to one another.

Do you remember Mr. Caldicott who used to preach in the infant schoolroom at Sidmouth? He died here the death of a saint, as he had lived a saintly life, about three weeks ago. It affected me a good deal. But he was always so associated in my thoughts more with heaven than earth, that scarcely a transition seems to have passed upon his locality. 'Present with the Lord' is true of him now; even as 'having his conversation in heaven' was formerly. There is little difference.

May it be so with us all, with you and with me, my ever and very dear friend! In the meantime do not forget me. I never can forget *you*.

Your affectionate and grateful

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Arabel desires her love to be offered to you.

To H. S. Boyd

1 Beacon Terrace, Torquay: July 8, 1840.

My ever dear Friend, — I must write to you, although it is so very long, or at least seems so, since you wrote to me. But you say to Arabel in speaking of me that I '*used* to care for what is poetical;' therefore, perhaps you say to yourself sometimes that I *used* to care for *you!* I am anxious to vindicate my identity to you, in that respect above all.

It is a long, dreary time since I wrote to you. I admit the pause on my own part, while I charge you with another. But *your* silence has embraced more pleasantness and less suffering to you than mine has to me, and I thank God for

a prosperity in which my unchangeable regard for you causes me to share directly. . . .

I have not rallied this summer as soon and well as I did last. I was very ill early in April at the time of our becoming conscious to our great affliction — so ill as to believe it utterly improbable, speaking humanly, that I ever should be any better. I am, however, a very great deal better, and gain strength by sensible degrees, however slowly, and do hope for the best — 'the best' meaning one sight more of London. In the meantime I have not yet been able to leave my bed.

To prove to you that I who 'used to care' for poetry do so still, and that I have not been absolutely idle lately, an 'Athenæum' shall be sent to you containing a poem on the subject of the removal of Napoleon's ashes.[1] It is a fitter subject for you than for me. Napoleon is no idol of *mine*. *I* never made a 'setting sun' of him. But my physician suggested the subject as a noble one, and then there was something suggestive in the consideration that the 'Bellerophon' lay on those very bay-waters opposite to my bed.

Another poem (which you won't like, I dare say) is called 'The Lay of the Rose,'[2] and appeared lately in a magazine. Arabel is going to write it out for you, she desires me to tell you with her best love. Indeed, I have written lately (as far as manuscript goes) a good deal, only on all sorts of subjects and in as many shapes.

Lazarus would make a fine poem, wouldn't he? I lie here, weaving a great many schemes. I am seldom at a loss for thread.

Do write sometimes to me, and tell me if you do anything besides hearing the clocks strike and bells ring. My beloved papa is with me still. There are so many mercies close around me (and his presence is far from the least),

[1] 'Crowned and Buried' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 9).

[2] *Poetical Works*, iii. 152.

that God's *Being* seems proved to me, *demonstrated* to me, by His manifested love. May His blessing in the full lovingness rest upon you always! Never fancy I can forget or think of you coldly.

Your affectionate and grateful

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

The above letter was written only three days before the tragedy which utterly wrecked Elizabeth Barrett's life for a time, and cast a deep shadow over it which never wholly passed away — the death of her brother Edward through drowning. On July 11, he and two friends had gone for a sail in a small boat. They did not return when they were expected, and presently a rumour came that a boat, answering in appearance to theirs, had been seen to founder in Babbicombe Bay; but it was not until three days later that final confirmation of the disaster was obtained by the discovery of the bodies. What this blow meant to the bereaved sister cannot be told: the horror with which she refers to it, even at a distance of many years, shows how deeply it struck. It was the loss of the brother whom she loved best of all; and she had the misery of thinking that it was to attend on her that he had come to the place where he met his death. Little wonder if Torquay was thenceforward a memory from which she shrank, and if even the sound of the sea became a horror to her.

One natural consequence of this terrible sorrow is a long break in her correspondence. It is not until the beginning of 1841 that she seems to have resumed the thread of her life and to have returned to her literary occupations. Her health had inevitably suffered under the shock, and in the autumn of 1840 Miss Mitford speaks of not daring to expect more than a few months of lingering life. But when things were at the worst, she began unexpectedly to take a turn for the better. Through the winter she slowly gathered

strength, and with strength the desire to escape from Torquay, with its dreadful associations, and to return to London. Meanwhile her correspondence with her friends revived, and with Horne in particular she was engaged during 1841 in an active interchange of views with regard to two literary projects. Indeed, it was only the return to work that enabled her to struggle against the numbing effect of the calamity which had overwhelmed her. Some time afterwards (in October 1843) she wrote to Mrs. Martin: 'For my own part and experience — I do not say it as a phrase or in exaggeration, but from very clear and positive conviction — I do believe that I should be *mad* at this moment, if I had not forced back — dammed out — the current of rushing recollections by work, work, work.' One of the projects in which she was concerned was 'Chaucer Modernised,' a scheme for reviving interest in the father of English poetry, suggested in the first instance by Wordsworth, but committed to the care of Horne, as editor, for execution. According to the scheme as originally planned, all the principal poets of the day were to be invited to share the task of transmuting Chaucer into modern language. Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Horne, and others actually executed some portions of the work; Tennyson and Browning, it was hoped, would lend a hand with some of the later parts. Horne invited Miss Barrett to contribute, and, besides executing modernisations of 'Queen Annelida and False Arcite' and 'The Complaint of Annelida,'[1] she also advised generally on the work of the other writers during its progress through the press. The other literary project was for a lyrical drama, to be written in collaboration with Horne. It was to be called 'Psyché Apocalypté,' and was to be a drama on the Greek model, treating of the birth and self-realisation of the soul of man.

[1] These versions are not reprinted in her collected *Poetical Works*, but are to be found in 'Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer modernised' (1841).

The sketch of its contents, given in the correspondence with Horne, will make the modern reader accept with equanimity the fact that it never progressed beyond the initial stage of drafting the plot. It is allegorical, philosophical, fantastic, unreal — everything which was calculated to bring out the worst characteristics of Miss Barrett's style and to intensify her faults. Fortunately her removal from Torquay to London interrupted the execution of the scheme. It was never seriously taken up again, and, though never explicitly abandoned, died a natural death from inanition, somewhat to the relief of Miss Barrett, who had come to recognise its impracticability.

Apart from the correspondence with Horne, which has been published elsewhere, very few letters are left from this period; but those which here follow serve to bridge over the interval until the departure from Torquay, which closes one well-marked period in the life of the poetess.

To Mrs. Martin

December 11, 1840.

My ever dearest Mrs. Martin, — I should have written to you without this last proof of your remembrance — this cape, which, warm and pretty as it is, I value so much more as the work of your hands and gift of your affection towards me. Thank you, dearest Mrs. Martin, and thank you too for *all the rest* — for all your sympathy and love. And do believe that although grief had so changed me from myself and warped me from my old instincts, as to prevent my looking forwards with pleasure to seeing you again, yet that full amends are made in the looking back with a pleasure more true because more tender than any old retrospections. Do give my love to dear Mr. Martin, and say what I could not have said even if I had seen him.

Shall you really, dearest Mrs. Martin, come again? Don't think we do not think of the hope you left us. Because we do indeed.

A note from papa has brought the comforting news that my dear, dear Stormie is in England again, in London, and looking perfectly well. It is a mercy which makes me very thankful, and would make me joyful if anything could. But the meanings of some words change as we live on. Papa's note is hurried. It was a sixty-day passage, and that is all he tells me. Yes — there is something besides about Sette and Occy being either unknown or misknown, through the fault of their growing. Papa is not near returning, I think. He has so much to do and see, and so much cause to be enlivened and renewed as to spirits, that I begged him not to think about me and stay away as long as he pleased. And the accounts of him and of all at home are satisfying, I thank God. . . .

There is an east wind just now, which I feel. Nevertheless, Dr. Scully has said, a few minutes since, that I am as well as he could hope, considering the season.

May God bless you ever!

Your gratefully attached

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

March 29, 1841.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Have you thought 'The dream has come true'? I mean the dream of the flowers which you pulled for me and I wouldn't look at, even? I fear you must have thought that the dream about my ingratitude has come true.

And yet it has not. Dearest Mrs. Martin, it has *not*. I have not forgotten you or remembered you less affectionately through all the silence, or longed less for the letters I did not ask for. But the truth is, my faculties seem to hang heavily now, like flappers when the spring is broken. *My* spring *is* broken, and a separate exertion is necessary for the lifting up of each — and then it falls down again. I never felt so before: there is no wonder

that I should feel so now. Nevertheless, I don't give up much to the pernicious languor — the tendency to lie down to sleep among the snows of a weary journey — I don't give up much to it. Only I find it sometimes at the root of certain negligences — for instance, of this toward *you*.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, receive my sympathy, *our* sympathy, in the anxiety you have lately felt so painfully, and in the rejoicing for its happy issue. Do say when you write (I take for granted, you see, that you will write) how Mrs. B—— is now — besides the intelligence more nearly touching me, of your own and Mr. Martin's health and spirits. May God bless you both!

Ah! but you did not come: I was disappointed!

And Mrs. Hanford! Do you know, I tremble in my reveries sometimes, lest you should think it, guess it to be half unkind in me not to have made an exertion to see Mrs. Hanford. It was not from want of interest in her — least of all from want of love to *you*. But I have not stirred from my bed yet. But, to be honest, that was not the reason — I did not feel as if I *could*, without a painful effort, which, on the other hand, could not, I was conscious, result in the slightest shade of satisfaction to her, receive and talk to her. Perhaps it is hard for you to *fancy* even how I shrink away from the very thought of seeing a human face — except those immediately belonging to me in love or relationship — (yours *does*, you know) — and a stranger's might be easier to look at than one long known . . . .

For my own part, my dearest Mrs. Martin, my heart has been lightened lately by kind, *honest* Dr. Scully (who would never give an opinion just to please me), saying that I am 'quite right' to mean to go to London, and shall probably be fit for the journey early in June. He says that I may pass the winter there moreover, and with impunity — that wherever I am it will probably be necessary for me to remain

shut up during the cold weather, and that under such circumstances it is quite possible to warm a London room to as safe a condition as a room *here*. So my heart is lightened of the fear of opposition: and the only means of regaining whatever portion of earthly happiness is not irremediably lost to me by the Divine decree, I am free to use. In the meantime, it really does seem to me that I make some progress in health — if the word in my lips be not a mockery. Oh, I fancy I shall be strengthened to get home!

Your remarks on Chaucer pleased me very much. I am glad you liked what I did — or tried to do — and as to the criticisms, you were right — and they sha'n't be unattended to if the opportunity of correction be given to me.

Ever your affectionate

BA.

To H. S. Boyd

August 28, 1841.

My very dear Friend, — I have fluctuated from one shadow of uncertainty and anxiety to another, all the summer, on the subject to which my last earthly wishes cling, and I delayed writing to you to be able to say I am going to London. I may say so now — as far as the human may say 'yes' or 'no' of their futurity. The carriage, a patent carriage with a bed in it, and set upon some hundreds of springs, is, I believe, on its road down to me, and immediately upon its arrival we begin our journey. Whether we shall ever complete it remains uncertain — *more* so than other uncertainties. My physician appears a good deal alarmed, calls it an undertaking full of hazard, and myself the 'Empress Catherine' for insisting upon attempting it. But I must. I go, as 'the doves to their windows,' to the only earthly daylight I see here. I go to rescue myself from the associations of this dreadful place. I go to restore to my poor papa the companionship of his family. Enough

has been done and suffered for *me*. I thank God I am going home at last.

How kind it was in you, my very kind and ever very dear friend, to ask me to visit you at Hampstead! I felt myself smiling while I read that part of your letter, and laid it down and suffered the vision to arise of your little room and your great Gregory and your dear self scolding me softly as in the happy olden times for not reading slow enough. Well — we do not know what *may* happen! I *may* (even that is probable) read to you again. But now — ah, my dear friend — if you could imagine me such as I am! — you would not think I could visit you! Yet I am wonderfully better this summer; and if I can but reach home and bear the first painful excitement, it will do me more good than anything — I know it will! And if it does not, it will be *well* even so.

I shall tell them to send you the 'Athenæum' of last week, where I have a 'House of Clouds,'[1] which papa likes so much that he would wish to live in it if it were not for the damp. There is not a clock in one room — that's another objection. How are your clocks? Do they go? and do you like their voices as well as you used to do?

I think Annie is not with you; but in case of her still being so, do give her (and yourself too) Arabel's love and mine. I wish I heard of you oftener. Is there nobody to write? May God bless you!

Your ever affectionate friend,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

August 31, 1831 [*sic*].

Thank you, my ever dear friend, with almost my last breath at Torquay, for your kindness about the Gregory, besides the kind note itself. It is, however, too late. We go, or mean at present to go, to-morrow; and the carriage

[1] *Poetical Works*, iii. 186.

which is to waft us through the air upon a thousand springs has actually arrived. You are not to think severely upon Dr. Scully's candour with me as to the danger of the journey. He *does* think it 'likely to do me harm;' therefore, you know, he was justified by his medical responsibility in laying before me all possible consequences. I have considered them all, and dare them gladly and gratefully. Papa's domestic comfort is broken up by the separation in his family, and the associations of this place lie upon me, struggle as I may, like the oppression of a perpetual nightmare. It is an instinct of self-preservation which impels me to escape — or to try to escape. And in God's mercy — though God forbid that I should deny either His mercy or His justice, if He should deny me — we may be together in Wimpole Street in a few days. Nelly Bordman has kindly written to me Mr. Jago's favourable opinion of the patent carriages, and his conviction of my accomplishing the journey without inconvenience.

May God bless you, my dear dear friend! Give my love to dearest Annie! Perhaps, if I am ever really in Wimpole Street, *safe enough for Greek*, you will trust the poems to me which you mention. I care as much for poetry as ever, and could not more.

Your affectionate and grateful

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

CHAPTER III

1841–1843

In September 1841 the journey from Torquay was actually achieved, and Miss Barrett returned to her father's house in London, from which she was never to be absent for more than a few hours at a time until the day, five years later, when she finally left it to join her husband, Robert Browning. Her life was that of an invalid, confined to her room for the greater part of each year, and unable to see any but a few intimate friends. Still, she regained some sort of strength, especially during the warmth of the summer months, and was able to throw herself with real interest into literary work. In a life such as this there are few outward events to record, and its story is best told in Miss Barrett's own letters, which, for the most part, need little comment. The letters of the end of 1841 and beginning of 1842 are almost entirely written to Mr. Boyd, and the main subject of them is the series of papers on the Greek Christian poets and the English poets which, at the suggestion of Mr. Dilke, then editor of the 'Athenæum,' she contributed to that periodical. Of the composition of original poetry we hear less at this time.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: October 2, 1841.

My very dear Friend, — I thank you for the letter and books which crossed the threshold of this house before me, and looked like your welcome to me home. I have read the passages you wished me to read — I have read them *again*: for I remember reading them under your star (or the

greater part of them) a long while ago. You, on the other hand, may remember of *me*, that I never could concede to you much admiration for your Gregory as a poet — not even to his grand work 'De Virginitate.' He is one of those writers, of whom there are instances in our own times, who are only poetical in prose.

The passage imitative of Chryses I cannot think much of. Try to be forgiving. It is toasted dry between the two fires of the Scriptures and Homer, and is as stiff as any dry toast out of the simile. To be sincere, I like dry toast better.

The Hymns and Prayers I very much prefer; and although I remembered a good deal about them, it has given me a pleasure you will approve of to go through them in this edition. The one which I like best, which I like far best, which I think worth all the rest ('De Virginitate' and all put together), is the *second* upon page 292, beginning 'Soi charis.' It is very fine, I think, written out of the heart and for the heart, warm with a natural heat, and not toasted dry and brown and stiff at a fire by any means.

Dear Mr. Boyd, I coveted Arabel's walk to you the other day. I shall often covet my neighbour's walks, I believe, although (and may God be praised for it!) I am more happy — that is, nearing to the feeling of happiness now — than a month since I could believe possible to a heart so bruised and crushed as mine has [been].[1] To be at home is a blessing and a relief beyond what these words can say.

But, dear Mr. Boyd, you said something in a note to Arabel some little time ago, which I will ask of your kindness to avoid saying again. I have been through the whole summer very much better; and even if it were not so I should dread being annoyed by more medical speculations. Pray do not suggest any. I am not in a state to admit of experiments, and my case is a very clear and simple one. I have not *one symptom* like those of my old illness; and after

[1] The original has 'mine,' an obvious slip of the pen.

more than fifteen years' absolute suspension of them, their recurrence is scarcely probable. My case is very clear: not tubercular consumption, not what is called a 'decline,' but an affection of the lungs which leans towards it. You know a blood-vessel broke three years ago, and I never quite got over it. Mr. Jago, not having seen me, could scarcely be justified in a conjecture of the sort, when the opinions of four able physicians, two of them particularly experienced in diseases of the chest, and the other two the most eminent of the faculty in the east and west of England, were decided and contrary, while coincident with each other. Besides, you see, I am becoming better — and I could not desire more than that. Dear Mr. Boyd, do not write a word about it any more, either to me or others. I am sure you would not willingly disturb me. Nelly Bordman is good and dear, but I can't let her prescribe for me anything except her own affection.

I hope Arabel expressed for me my thankful sense of Mrs. Smith's kind intention. But, indeed, although I would see *you*, dear Mr. Boyd, gladly, or an angel or a fairy or any very particular friend, I am not fit either in body or spirit for general society. I *can't* see people, and if I could it would be very bad for me. Is Mrs. Smith writing? Are you writing? Part of me is worn out; but the poetical part — that is, the *love* of poetry — is growing in me as freshly and strongly as if it were watered every day. Did anybody ever love it and stop in the middle? I wonder if anybody ever did? . . . Believe me your affectionate

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: December 29, 1841.

My dear Friend, — I should not have been half as idle about transcribing these translations[1] if I had fancied you

[1] Translations of three poems of Gregory Nazianzen, printed in the *Athenæum* of January 8, 1842.

could care so much to have them as Arabel tells me you do. They are recommended to your mercy, O Greek Daniel! The *last* sounds in my ears most like English poetry; but I assure you I took the least pains with it. The second is obscure as its original, if it do not (as it does not) equal it otherwise. The first is yet more unequal to the Greek. I praised that Greek poem above all of Gregory's, for the reason that it has *unity and completeness*, for which, to speak generally, you may search the streets and squares and alleys of Nazianzum in vain. Tell me what you think of my part.

Ever affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

Have you a Plotinus, and would you trust him to me in that case? Oh no, you do not tempt me with your musical clocks. My time goes to the best music when I read or write; and whatever money I can spend upon my own pleasures flows away in books.

To Mr. Westwood[1]

50 Wimpole Street: January 2, 1842.

Miss Barrett, inferring Mr. Westwood from the handwriting, begs his acceptance of the unworthy little book[2] he does her the honour of desiring to see.

It is more unworthy than he could have expected when he expressed that desire, having been written in very early youth, when the mind was scarcely free in any measure from trammels and Popes, and, what is worse, when flippancy of language was too apt to accompany immaturity

[1] Mr. Thomas Westwood was the author of a volume of 'Poems,' published in 1840, 'Beads from a Rosary' (1843), 'The Burden of the Bell' (1850), and other volumes of verse. Several of his compositions were appearing occasionally in the *Athenæum* at the time when this correspondence with Miss Barrett commenced.

[2] The *Essay on Mind*.

of opinion. The miscellaneous verses are, still more than the chief poem, 'childish things' in a strict literal sense. and the whole volume is of little interest even to its writer except for personal reasons — except for the traces of dear affections, since rudely wounded, and of that *love* of poetry which began with her sooner than so soon, and must last as long as life does, without being subject to the changes of life. Little more, therefore, can remain for such a volume than to be humble and shrink from circulation. Yet Mr. Westwood's kind words win it to his hands. Will he receive at the same moment the expression of touched and gratified feelings with which Miss Barrett read what he wrote on the subject of her later volumes, still very imperfect, although more mature and true to the *truth* within? Indeed she is thankful for what he said so kindly in his note to her.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: January 6, 1842.

My dear Friend, — I have done your bidding and sent the translations to the 'Athenæum,' attaching to them an infamous prefatory note which says all sorts of harm of Gregory's poetry. You will be very angry with it and me.

And you *may* be angry for another reason — that in the midst of my true thankfulness for the emendations you sent me, I ventured to reject one or two of them. You are right, probably, and I wrong; but still, I thought within myself, with a womanly obstinacy not altogether peculiar to me, — 'If he and I were to talk together about them, he would kindly give up the point to me — so that, now we cannot talk together, *I might as well take it.*' Well, you will see what I have done. Try not to be angry with me. You shall have the 'Athenæum' as soon as possible.

My dear Mr. Boyd, you know how I disbelieved the probability of these papers being accepted. You will comprehend my surprise on receiving last night a very courteous

note from the editor, which I would send to you if it were legible to anybody except people used to learn reading from the pyramids. He wishes me to contribute to the 'Athenæum' some prose papers in the form of reviews — 'the review being a mere form, and the book a mere text.' He is not very clear — but I fancy that a few translations of *excerpta*, with a prose analysis and synthesis of the original author's genius, might suit his purpose. Now suppose I took up some of the early Christian Greek poets, and wrote a few continuous papers *so?*[1] Give me your advice, my dear friend! I think of Synesius, for one. Suppose you send me a list of the names which occur to you! *Will* you advise me? Will you write directly? Will you make allowance for my teazing you? Will you lend me your little Synesius, and Clarke's book? I mean the one commenced by Dr. Clarke and continued by his son. Above all things, however, I want the advice.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

Wednesday, January 13, 1842 (postmark).

My dear Friend, — Thank you, thank you, for your kind suggestion and advice altogether. I had just (when your note arrived) finished two hymns of Synesius, one being the seventh and the other the ninth. Oh! I do remember that you performed upon the latter, and my modesty should have certainly bid me 'avaunt' from it. Nevertheless, it is so fine, so prominent in the first class of Synesius's beauties, that I took courage and dismissed my scruples, and have produced a version which I have not compared to yours at all hitherto, but which probably is much rougher and *rather*

[1] The series of papers on the Greek Christian Poets appeared in the *Athenæum* for February and March 1842; they are reprinted in the *Poetical Works*, v. 109–200.

closer, winning in faith what it loses in elegance. 'Elegance' isn't a word for me, you know, generally speaking. The barbarians herd with me, 'by two and three.'

I had a letter to-day from Mr. Dilke, who agrees to everything, closes with the idea about 'Christian Greek poets' (only begging me to keep away from theology), and suggesting a subsequent reviewal of English poetical literature, from Chaucer down to our times.[1] Well, but the Greek poets. With all your kindness, I have scarcely sufficient materials for a full and minute survey of them. I have won a sight of the 'Poetæ Christiani,' but the price is ruinous—*fourteen guineas*, and then the work consists almost entirely of Latin poets, deducting Gregory and Nonnus, and John Damascenus, and a cento from Homer by somebody or other. Turning the leaves rapidly, I do not see much else; and you know I may get a separate copy of John Dam., and have access to the rest. Try to turn in your head what I should do. Greg. Nyssen did not write poems, did he? Have I a chance of seeing your copy of Mr. Clarke's book? It would be useful in the matters of chronology.

I humbly beg your pardon, and Gregory's, for the insolence of my note. It was as brief as it could be, and did not admit of any extended reference and admiration to his qualities as an orator. But whoever read it to you should have explained that when I wrote 'He was an orator,' the word *orator* was marked emphatically, so as to appear printed in capital letters of emphasis. Do not say 'you *chose*,' 'you *chose*.' I didn't and don't choose to be obstinate, indeed; but I can't see the sense of that 'heavenly soul.'

Ever your grateful and affectionate

E. B. B.

[1] This scheme took shape in the series of papers on the English Poets which appeared in the *Athenæum* in the course of June and August 1842 (reprinted in *Poetical Works*, v. 201–290).

I shall have room for praising Gregory in these papers.

To H. S. Boyd

February 4, 1842.

My dear Friend, — You must be thinking, if you are not a St. Boyd for good temper, that among the Gregorys and Synesiuses I have forgotten everything about you. No; indeed it has not been so. I have never *stopped* being grateful to you for your kind notes, and the two last pieces of Gregory, although I did not say an overt 'Thank you;' but I have been very very busy besides, and thus I answered to myself for your being kind enough to pardon a silence which was compelled rather than voluntary.

Do you ever observe that as vexations don't come alone, occupations don't, and that, if you happen to be engaged upon one particular thing, it is the signal for your being waylaid by bundles of letters desiring immediate answers, and proof sheets or manuscript works whose writers request your opinion while their 'printer waits'? The old saints are not responsible for all the filling up of my time. I have been *busy upon busy*.

The first part of my story about the Greek poets went to the 'Athenæum' some days ago, but, although graciously received by the editor, it won't appear this week, or I should have had a proof sheet (which was promised to me) before now. I must contrive to include all I have to say on the subject in *three parts*. They will admit, they tell me, a fourth *if I please*, but evidently they would prefer as much brevity as I could vouchsafe. Only two poets are in the first notice, and *twenty* remain — and neither of the two is Gregory.

Will you let me see that volume of Gregory which contains the 'Christus Patiens'? Send it by any boy on the heath, and I will remunerate him for the walk and the burden, and thank you besides. Oh, don't be afraid! I

am not going to charge it upon Gregory, but on the younger Apollinaris, whose claim is stronger, and I rather wish to refresh my recollection of the height and breadth of that tragic misdemeanour.

It is quite true that I never have suffered much pain, and equally so that I continue most decidedly better, notwithstanding the winter. I feel, too — I do hope not ungratefully — the blessing granted to me in the possibility of literary occupation, — which is at once occupation and distraction. Carlyle (not the infidel, but the philosopher) calls literature a 'fireproof pleasure.' How truly! How deeply I have felt that truth!

May God bless you, dear Mr. Boyd. I don't despair of looking in your face one day yet before my last.

Ever your affectionate and obliged

E. B. B.

Arabel's love.

To H. S. Boyd

March 2, 1842.

My ever very dear Friend, — Do receive the assurance that whether I leave out the right word or put in the wrong one, you never can be other to me than just *that* while I live, and why not after I have ceased to live? And now — what have I done in the meantime, to be called 'Miss Barrett'? 'I pause for a reply.'

Of course it gives me very great pleasure to hear you speak so kindly of my first paper. Some *bona avis* as good as a nightingale must have shaken its wings over me as I began it; and if it will but sit on the same spray while I go on towards the end, I shall rejoice exactly fourfold. The third paper went to Mr. Dilke to-day, and I was so fidgety about getting it away (and it seemed to cling to my writing case with both its hands), that I would not do any writing, even as little as this note, until it was quite gone out of sight. You know it is possible that he, the

editor, may not please to have the *fourth* paper; but even in that case, it is better for the 'Remarks' to remain fragmentary, than be compressed till they are as dry as a *hortus siccus* of poets.

Certainly you do and must praise my number one too much. Number one (that's myself) thinks so. I do really; and the supererogatory virtue of kindness may be acknowledged out of the pale of the Romish Church.

In regard to Gregory and Synesius, you will see presently that I have not wronged them altogether.

As you have ordered the 'Athenæums,' I will not send one to-morrow so as to repeat my ill fortune of being too late. But tell me if you would like to have any from me, and how many.

It was very kind in you to pat Flush's[1] head in defiance of danger and from pure regard for me. I kissed his head where you had patted it; which association of approximations I consider as an imitation of shaking hands with you and as the next best thing to it. You understand — don't you? — that Flush is my constant companion, my friend, my amusement, lying with his head on one page of my folios while I read the other. (Not *your* folios — I respect *your* books, be sure.) Oh, I dare say, if the truth were known, Flush understands Greek excellently well.

I hope you are right in thinking that we shall meet again. Once I wished *not* to live, but the faculty of life seems to have sprung up in me again, from under the crushing foot of heavy grief.

Be it all as God wills.

Believe me, your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

[1] Miss Barrett's dog, the gift of Miss Mitford. His praise is sung in her poem, 'To Flush, my Dog' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 19), and in many of the following letters. He accompanied his mistress to Italy, lived to a good old age, and now lies buried in the vaults of Casa Guidi.

To H. S. Boyd

Saturday night, March 5, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I am quite angry with myself for forgetting your questions when I answered your letter.

Could you really imagine that I have not looked into the Greek tragedians for years, with my true love for Greek poetry? That is asking a question, you will say, and not answering it. Well, then, I answer by a 'Yes' the one you put to me. I had two volumes of Euripides with me in Devonshire, and have read him as well as Æschylus and Sophocles — that is *from* them — both before and since I went there. You know I have gone through every line of the three tragedians long ago, in the way of regular, consecutive reading.

You know also that I had at different times read different dialogues of Plato; but when three years ago, and a few months previous to my leaving home, I became possessed of a complete edition of his works, edited by Bekker, why then I began with the first volume and went through the whole of his writings, both those I knew and those I did not know, one after another: and have at this time read, not only all that is properly attributed to Plato, but even those dialogues and epistles which pass falsely under his name — everything except two books I think, or three, of the treatise 'De Legibus,' which I shall finish in a week or two, as soon as I can take breath from Mr. Dilke.

Now the questions are answered.

Ever your affectionate and grateful friend,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

Thursday, March 10, 1842 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — I did not know until to-day whether the paper would appear on Saturday or not; but as I have now received the proof sheets, there can be no doubt of it. I have been and *am* hurried and hunted almost into

a corner through the pressing for the fourth paper, and the difficulty about books. You will forgive a very short note to-night.

I have read of Aristotle only his Poetics, his Ethics, and his work upon Rhetoric, but I mean to take him regularly into both hands when I finish Plato's last page. Aristophanes I took with me into Devonshire; and after all, I do not know much more of *him* than three or four of his plays may stand for. Next week, my very dear friend, I shall be at your commands, and sit in spirit at your footstool, to hear and answer anything you may care to ask me — but oh! what have I done that you should talk to *me* about 'venturing,' or 'liberty,' or anything of that kind?

From your affectionate and grateful catechumen,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

March 29, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I received your long letter and received your short one, and thank you for the pleasure of both. Of course I am very *very* glad of your approval in the matter of the papers, and your kindness could not have wished to give me more satisfaction than it gave actually. Mr. Kenyon tells me that Mr. Burgess[1] has been reading and commending the papers, and has brought me from him a newly discovered scene of the 'Bacchæ' of Euripides, edited by Mr. Burgess himself for the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' and of which he considers that the 'Planctus Mariæ,' at least the passage I extracted from it, is an imitation. Should you care to see it? Say 'Yes,' — and I will send it to you.

Do you think it was wrong to make *eternity* feminine?

[1] George Burges, the classical scholar. He had in 1832 contributed to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (under a pseudonym) some lines purporting to be a newly discovered portion of the *Bacchæ*, but really composed by himself on the basis of a parallel passage in the *Christus Patiens*. It is apparently to these lines that Miss Barrett alludes, though the 'discovery' was then nearly ten years old.

I knew that the Greek word was not feminine; but imagined that the English personification should be so. Am I wrong in this? Will you consider the subject again?

Ah, yes! That was a mistake of mine about putting Constantine for Constantius. I wrote from memory, and the memory betrayed me. But say nothing about it. Nobody will find it out. I send you Silentiarius and some poems of Pisida in the same volume. Even if you had not asked for them, I should have asked you to look at some passages which are fine in both. It appears to me that Silentiarius writes difficult Greek, overlaying his description with a multitude of architectural and other far fetched words! Pisida is hard, too, occasionally, from other causes, particularly in the 'Hexaëmeron,' which is not in the book I send you but in another very gigantic one (as tall as the Irish giants), which you may see if you please. I will send a coach and six with it if you please.

John Mauropus, of the Three Towns, I owe the knowledge of to *you*. *You* lent me the book with his poems, you know. He is a great favorite of mine in all ways. I very much admire his poetry.

Believe me, ever your affectionate and grateful
Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Pray tell me what you think. I am sorry to observe that the book I send you is marked very irregularly; that is, marked in some places, unmarked in others, just as I happened to be near or far from my pencil and inkstand. Otherwise I should have liked to compare judgments with you.

Keep the book as long as you please; it is my own.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street: April 2, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — . . . As to your kind desire to hear whatever in the way of favorable remark I have gathered together for fruit of my papers, I put on a veil and

tell you that Mr. Kenyon thought it well done, although 'labour thrown away, from the unpopularity of the subject;' that Miss Mitford was very much pleased, with the warm-heartedness common to her; that Mrs. Jamieson [*sic*] read them 'with great pleasure' unconsciously of the author; and that Mr. Horne the poet and Mr. Browning the poet were not behind in approbation. Mr. Browning is said to be learned in Greek, especially in the dramatists; and of Mr. Horne I should suspect something similar. Miss Mitford and Mrs. Jamieson, although very gifted and highly cultivated women, are not Grecians, and therefore judge the papers simply as English compositions.

The single unfavorable opinion is Mr. Hunter's, who thinks that the criticisms are not given with either sufficient seriousness or diffidence, and that there is a painful sense of effort through the whole. Many more persons may say so whose voices I do not hear. I am glad that yours, my dear indulgent friend, is not one of them.

Believe me, your ever affectionate

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

May 17, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — Have you thought all unkindness out of my silence? Yet the inference is not a true one, however it may look in logic.

You do not like Silentiarius *very much* (that is *my* inference), since you have kept him so short a time. And I quite agree with you that he is not a poet of the same interest as Gregory Nazianzen, however he may appear to me of more lofty cadence in his versification. My own impression is that John of Euchaita is worth two of each of them as a poet. His poems strike me as standing in the very first class of the productions of the Christian centuries. Synesius and John of Euchaita! I shall always think of those two together — not by their similarity, but their dignity.

I return you the books you lent me with true thanks, and also those which Mrs. Smith, I believe, left in your hands for me. I thank *you* for them, and *you* must be good enough to thank *her*. They were of use, although of a rather sublime indifference for poets generally. . . .

I shall send you soon the series of the Greek papers you asked for, and also perhaps the first paper of a Survey of the English Poets, under the pretence of a review of 'The Book of the Poets,' a bookseller's selection published lately. I begin from Langland, of Piers Plowman and the Malvern Hills. The first paper went to the editor last week, and I have heard nothing as to whether it will appear on Saturday or not, and perhaps if it does you won't care to have it sent to you. Tell me if you do or don't. I have suffered unpleasantly in the heart lately from this tyrannous dynasty of east winds, but have been well otherwise, and am better in *that*. Flushie means to bark the next time he sees you in revenge for what you say of him.

Good bye, dear Mr. Boyd; think of me as

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

June 3, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I disobeyed you in not simply letting you know of the publication of my 'English Poets,' because I did not know myself when the publication was to take place, and I hope you will forgive the innocent crime and accept the first number going to you with this note. I warn you that there will be two numbers more at *least*. Therefore do not prepare yourself for perhaps the impossible magnanimity of reading them through.

And now I am fit for rivalship with your clocks, papa having given me an Æolian harp for the purpose. Do you know the music of an Æolian harp, and that nothing below the spherical harmonies is so sweet and soft and mournfully

wild? The amusing part of it is (after the poetical) that Flushie is jealous and thinks it is alive, and takes it as very hard that I should say 'beautiful' to anything except his ears!

Arabel talks of going to see you; but if you are sensible to this intense and most overcoming heat, you will pardon her staying away for the present.

We have heard to-day that Annie proposes to publish her Miscellany by subscription; and although I know it to be the only way, compatible with publication at all, to avoid a pecuniary loss, yet the custom is so entirely abandoned except in the case of persons of a lower condition of life than *your daughter*, that I am sorry to think of the observations it may excite. The whole scheme has appeared to me from the beginning most *foolish*, and if you knew what I know of the state and fortune of our ephemeral literature, you would use what influence you have with her to induce her to condemn her 'contributions' to the adorning of a private annual rather than the purpose in unhappy question. I wish I dared to appeal through my true love for her to her own good sense once more.

My very dear friend's affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

If you *do* read any of the papers, let me know, I beseech you, your full and free opinion of them.

To H. S. Boyd

June 22, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I thank you gratefully for your two notes, with their united kindness and candour — the latter still rarer than the former, if less 'sweet upon the tongue.' Sir William Alexander's tragedy (*that* is the right name, I think, Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling) you will not find mentioned among my dramatic notices, because I was

much pressed for room, and had to treat the whole subject as briefly as possible, striking off, like the Roman, only the heads of the flowers, and I did not, besides, receive your injunction until my third paper on the dramatists was finished and in the press. When you read it you will find some notice of that tragedy by Marlowe, the first knowledge of which I owe to you, my dear Mr. Boyd, as how much besides? And then comes the fourth paper, and I tremble to anticipate the possible — nay, the very probable — scolding I may have from you, upon my various heresies as to Dryden and Pope and Queen Anne's versificators. In the meantime you have breathing time, for Mr. Dilke, although very gracious and courteous to my offence of extending the two papers he asked for *into four*,[1] yet could find no room in the 'Athenæum' last week for me, and only *hopes* for it this week. And after this week comes the British Association business, which always fills every column for a month, so that a further delay is possible enough. 'It will increase,' says Mr. Dilke, 'the zest of the reader,' whereas *I* say (at least think) that it will help him quite to forget me. I explain all this lest you should blame me for neglect to yourself in not sending the papers. I am so pleased that you like at least the second article. That is encouragement to me.

Flushie did not seem to think the harp alive when it was taken out of the window and laid close to him. He examined it particularly, and is a philosophical dog. But I am sure that at first and while it was playing he thought so.

In the same way he can't bear me to look into a glass, because he thinks there is a little brown dog inside every looking glass, and he is jealous of its being so close to *me*. He used to tremble and bark at it, but now he is *silently* jealous, and contents himself with squeezing close, close to me and kissing me expressively.

My very dear friend's ever gratefully affectionate

E. B. B.

[1] Ultimately five.

To John Kenyon

50 Wimpole Street: Sunday night [September 1842].

My dear Mr. Kenyon, — Having missed my pleasure to-day by a coincidence worse for me than for you, I must, tired as I am to-night, tell you — ready for to-morrow's return of the books — what I have waited three whole days hoping to tell you by word of mouth. But mind, before I begin, I don't do so out of despair ever to see you again, because I trust steadfastly to your kindness to *come* again when *you* are not 'languid' and I am alone as usual; only that I dare not keep back from you any longer the following message of Miss Mitford. She says: 'Won't he take us in his way to Torquay? or from Torquay? Beg him to do so — and of all love, to tell us *when*.' Afterwards, again: 'I think my father is better. Tell Mr. Kenyon what I say, and stand my friend with him and beg him to come.'

Which I do in the most effectual way — in her own words.

She is much pleased by means of your introduction. 'Tell dear Mr. Kenyon how very very much I like Mrs. Leslie. She seems all that is good and kind, and to add great intelligence and agreeableness to these prime qualities.'

Now I have done with being a messenger of the gods, and verily my caduceus is trembling in my hand.

O Mr. Kenyon! what have you done? You will know the interpretation of the reproach, your conscience holding the key of the cypher.

In the meantime I ought to be thanking you for your great kindness about this divine Tennyson.[1] Beautiful! beautiful! After all, it is a noble thing to be a poet.

[1] This refers to the recent publication of Tennyson's *Poems*, in two volumes, the first containing a re-issue of poems previously published, while the second was wholly new, and included such poems as the 'Morte d'Arthur,' 'Ulysses,' and 'Locksley Hall.'

But notwithstanding the poetry of the novelties — and you will observe that his two preceding volumes (only one of which I had seen before, having inquired for the other vainly) are included in these two — nothing appears to me quite equal to 'Œnone,' and perhaps a few besides of my ancient favorites. That is not said in disparagement of the last, but in admiration of the first. There is, in fact, more thought — more bare brave working of the intellect — in the latter poems, even if we miss something of the high ideality, and the music that goes with it, of the older ones. Only I am always inclined to believe that philosophic thinking, like music, is involved, however occultly, in high ideality of any kind.

You have not a key to the cypher of this at least, and I am so tired that one word seems tumbling over another all the way.

Ever affectionately yours,
ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

You will let me keep your beautiful ballad and the gods [1] a little longer.

To H. S. Boyd

September 14, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I have made you wait a long time for the 'North American Review,' because when your request came it was no longer within my reach, and because since then I have not been so well as usual from a sweep of the wing of the prevailing epidemic. Now, however, I am *better* than I was even before the attack, only wishing that it were possible to hook-and-eye on another summer to the hem of the garment of this last sunny one. At the end of such a double summer, to measure things humanly, I might be able

[1] No doubt Mr. Kenyon's translation of Schiller's 'Gods of Greece,' which was the occasion of Miss Barrett's poem 'The Dead Pan.'

to go to see you at Hampstead. Nevertheless, winters and adversities are more fit for us than a constant sun.

I suppose, dear Mr. Boyd, you want only to have this review read to you, and not *written*. Because it isn't out of laziness that I send the book to you; and Arabel would copy whatever you please willingly, provided you wished it. Keep the book as long as you please. I have put a paper mark and a pencil mark at the page and paragraph where I am taken up. It seems to me that the condemnation of 'The Seraphim' is not too hard. The poem wants *unity*.

As to your 'words of fire' about Wordsworth, if I had but a cataract at command I would try to quench them. His powers should not be judged of by my extracts or by anybody's extracts from his last-published volume.[1] Do you remember his grand ode upon Childhood — worth, to my apprehension, just twenty of Dryden's 'St. Cecilia's Day' — his sonnet upon Westminster Bridge, his lyric on a lark, in which the lark's music swells and exults, and the many noble and glorious passages of his 'Excursion'? You must not indeed blame me for estimating Wordsworth at *his height*, and on the other side I readily confess to you that he is occasionally, and not unfrequently, heavy and dull, and that Coleridge had an intenser genius. Tell me if you know anything of Tennyson. He has just published two volumes of poetry, one of which is a republication, but both full of inspiration.

Ever my very dear friend's affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

50 Wimpole Street: October 22, 1842.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Waiting first for you to write to me, and then waiting that I might write to you cheerfully, has ended by making so long a silence that I am almost

[1] *Poems, chiefly of early and late years, including The Borderers, a Tragedy* (1842).

ashamed to break it. And perhaps, even if I were not ashamed, you would be angry — perhaps you *are* angry, and don't much care now whether or not you ever hear from me again. Still I must write, and I must moreover ask you to write to me again; and I must in particular assure you that I have continued to love you sincerely, notwithstanding all the silence which might seem to say the contrary. What I should like best just now is to have a letter speaking comfortable details of your being comparatively well again; yet I hope on without it that you really are so much better as to be next to quite well. It was with great concern that I heard of the indisposition which hung about you, dearest Mrs. Martin, so long — I who had congratulated myself when I saw you last on the promise of good health in your countenance. May God bless you, and keep you better! And may you take care of yourself, and remember how many love you in the world, from dear Mr. Martin down to — E. B. B.

Well, now I must look around me and consider what there is to tell you. But I have been uneasy in various ways, sometimes by reason and sometimes by fantasy; and even now, although my dear old friend Dr. Scully is something better, he lies, I fear, in a very precarious state, while dearest Miss Mitford's letters from the deathbed of her father make my heart ache as surely almost as the post comes. There is nothing more various in character, nothing which distinguishes one human being from another more strikingly, than the expression of feeling, the manner in which it influences the outward man. If I were in her circumstances, I should sit paralysed — it would be impossible to me to write or to cry. And she, who loves and feels with the intensity of a nature warm in everything, seems to turn to sympathy by the very instinct of grief, and sits at the deathbed of her last relative, writing there, in letter after letter, every symptom, physical or moral — even to the very words of the raving of a delirium, and those

heart-breaking words! I could not write such letters; but I know she feels as deeply as any mourner in the world can. And all this reminds me of what you once asked me about the inscriptions in Lord Brougham's villa at Nice. There are probably as many different dialects for the heart as for the tongue, are there not? . . .

And now you will kindly like to have a word said about myself, and it need not be otherwise than a word to give your kindness pleasure. The long splendid summer, exhausting as the heat was to me sometimes, did me essential good, and left me walking about the room and equal to going downstairs (which I achieved four or five times), and even to going out in the chair, without suffering afterwards. And, best of all, the spitting of blood (I must tell you), which more or less kept by me continually, *stopped quite* some six weeks ago, and I have thus more reasonable hopes of being really and essentially better than I could have with such a symptom loitering behind accidental improvements. Weak enough, and with a sort of pulse which is not excellent, I certainly remain; but still, if I escape any decided attack this winter — and I am in garrison now — there are expectations of further good for next summer, and I may recover some moderate degree of health and strength again, and be able to *do* good instead of receiving it only.

I write under the eyes of Wordsworth. Not Wordsworth's living eyes, although the actual living poet had the infinite kindness to ask Mr. Kenyon twice last summer, when he was in London, if he might not come to see me. Mr. Kenyon said 'No' — I couldn't have said 'No' to Wordsworth, though I had never gone to sleep again afterwards. But this Wordsworth who looks on me now is Wordsworth in a picture. Mr. Haydon the artist, with the utmost kindness, has sent me the portrait he was painting of the great poet — an unfinished portrait — and I am to keep it until he wants to finish it. Such a head! such

majesty! and the poet stands musing upon Helvellyn! And all that — poet, Helvellyn, and all — is in my room![1]

Give my kind love to Mr. Martin — *our* kind love, indeed, to both of you — and believe me, my dearest Mrs. Martin,

Your ever affectionate Ba.

Is there any hope for us of you before the winter ends? Do consider.

To H. S. Boyd

Monday, October 31, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I have put off from day to day sending you these volumes, and in the meantime *I have had a letter from the great poet!* Did Arabel tell you that my sonnet on the picture was sent to Mr. Haydon, and that Mr. Haydon sent it to Mr. Wordsworth? The result was that Mr. Wordsworth wrote to me. King John's barons were never better pleased with their Charta than I am with this letter.[2]

[1] It was this picture that called forth the sonnet, 'On a Portrait of Wordsworth by B. R. Haydon' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 62), alluded to in the next letter.

[2] The following is the letter from Wordsworth which gave such pleasure to Miss Barrett, and which she treasured among her papers for the rest of her life. Two slips of the pen have been corrected between brackets.

'Rydal Mount: Oct. 26, '42.

'Dear Miss Barrett, — Through our common friend Mr. Haydon I have received a sonnet which his portrait of me suggested. I should have thanked you sooner for that effusion of a feeling towards myself, with which I am much gratified, but I have been absent from home and much occupied.

'The conception of your sonnet is in full accordance with the painter's intended work, and the expression vigorous; yet the word "ebb," though I do not myself object to it, nor wish to have it altered, will I fear prove obscure to nine readers out of ten.

"A vision free
And noble, Haydon, hath thine art released."

Owing to the want of inflections in our language the construction here is obscure. Would it not be a little [better] thus? — I was going to write a small change in the order of the words, but I find it would not remove

But I won't tell you any more about it until you have read the poems which I send you. Read first, to put you into good humour, the sonnet written on Westminster Bridge, vol. iii. page 78. Then take from the sixth volume, page 152, the passage beginning 'Within the soul' down to page 153 at 'despair,' and again at page 155 beginning with

I have seen
A curious child, &c.

down to page 157 to the end of the paragraph. If you admit these passages to be fine poetry, I wish much that you would justify me further by reading, out of the *second* volume, the two poems called 'Laodamia' and 'Tintern Abbey' at page 172 and page 161. I will not ask you to read any more; but I dare say you will rush on of your own account, in which case there is a fine ode upon the 'Power of Sound' in the same volume. Wordsworth is a philosophical and Christian poet, with depths in his soul to which poor Byron could

the objection. The verse, as I take it, would be somewhat clearer thus, if you would tolerate the redundant syllable:

"By a vision free
And noble, Haydon, is thine art released."

I had the gratification of receiving, a good while ago, two copies of a volume of your writing, which I have read with much pleasure, and beg that the thanks which I charged a friend to offer may be repeated [to] you.

'It grieved me much to hear from Mr. Kenyon that your health is so much deranged. But for that cause I should have presumed to call upon you when I was in London last spring.

'With every good wish, I remain, dear Miss Barrett, your much obliged

. 'Wm. Wordsworth.'

[Postmark: Ambleside, Oct. 28, 1842.]

It may be added that although Miss Barrett altered the passage criticised by the great poet, she did not accept his amendment. It now runs:

'A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist.'

never reach. Do be candid. Nay, I need not say so, because you always are, as I am

Your ever affectionate
Elizabeth B. Barrett.

To H. S. Boyd

December 4, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — You will think me in a discontented state of mind when I knit my brows like a 'sleeve of care' over your kind praises. But the truth is, I *won't* be praised for being liberal in Calvinism and love of Byron. *I* liberal in commending Byron! Take out my heart and try it! look at it and compare it with yours; and answer and tell me if I do not love and admire Byron more warmly than you yourself do. I suspect it indeed. Why, I am always reproached for my love to Byron. Why, people say to me, '*You*, who overpraise Byron!' Why, when I was a little girl (and, whatever you may think, my tendency is not to cast off my old loves!) I used to think seriously of dressing up like a boy and running away to be Lord Byron's page. And *I* to be praised now for being 'liberal' in admitting the merit of his poetry! *I!*

As for the Calvinism, I don't choose to be liberal there either. I don't call myself a Calvinist. I hang suspended between the two doctrines, and hide my eyes in God's love from the sights which other people *say* they see. I believe simply that the saved are saved by grace, and that they shall hereafter know it fully; and that the lost are lost by their choice and free will — by choosing to sin and die; and I believe absolutely that the deepest damned of all the lost will not dare to whisper to the nearest devil that reproach of Martha: 'If the Lord had been near me, I had not died.' But of the means of the working of God's grace, and of the time of the formation of the Divine counsels, I know nothing, guess nothing, and struggle to guess nothing; and my persuasion is that when people talk of what was

ordained or approved by God before the foundations of the world, their tendency is almost always towards a confusion of His eternal nature with the human conditions of ours; and to an oblivion of the fact that with *Him* there can be no after nor before.

At any rate, I do not find it good for myself to examine any more the brickbats of controversy — there is more than enough to think of in truths clearly revealed; more than enough for the exercise of the intellect and affections and adorations. I would rather not suffer myself to be disturbed, and perhaps irritated, where it is not likely that I should ever be informed. And although you tell me that your system of investigation is different from some others, answer me with your accustomed candour, and admit, my very dear friend, that this argument does not depend upon the construction of a Greek sentence or the meaning of a Greek word. Let a certain word[1] be 'fore-know' or 'publicly *favor*,' room for a stormy controversy yet remains. I went through the Romans with you partially, and wholly by myself, by your desire, and in reference to the controversy, long ago; and I could not then, and cannot now, enter into that view of Taylor and Adam Clarke, and yourself I believe, as to the *Jews and Gentiles*. Neither could I conceive that a particular part of the epistle represents an actual dialogue between a Jew and Gentile, since the form of question and answer appears to me there simply rhetorical. The Apostle Paul was learned in rhetoric; and I think he described so, by a rhetorical and vivacious form, that struggle between the flesh and the spirit common to all Christians; the spirit being triumphant through God in Christ Jesus. These are my impressions. Yours are different. And since we should not probably persuade each other, and since we are both of us fond of and earnest in what we fancy to be the truth, why should we cast away the thousand sympathies we rejoice in,

[1] The Greek προγιγνώσκειν, used in Romans viii. 29.

religious and otherwise, for the sake of a fruitless contention? 'What!' you would say (by the time we had quarrelled half an hour) 'can't you talk without being excited?' Half an hour afterwards: 'Pray *do* lower your voice — it goes through my head!' In another ten minutes: 'I could scarcely have believed you to be so obstinate.' In another: 'Your prejudices are insurmountable, and your reason most womanly — you are degenerated to the last degree.' In another — why, *then* you would turn me and Flush out of the room and so finish the controversy victoriously.

Was I wrong too, dearest Mr. Boyd, in sending the poems to the 'Athenæum'? Well, I meant to be right. I fancied that you would rather they were sent; and as your *name* was not attached, there could be no harm in leaving them to the editor's disposal. They are not inserted, as I anticipated. The religious character was a sufficient objection — their character of *prayer*. Mr. Dilke begged me once, while I was writing for him, to write the name of God and Jesus Christ as little as I could, because those names did not accord with the secular character of the journal!

Ever your affectionate and grateful

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Tell me how you like the sonnet; but you won't (I prophesy) like it. Keep the 'Athenæum.'

To H. S. Boyd

December 24, 1842.

My very dear Friend, — I am afraid that you will infer from my silence that you have affronted me into ill temper by your parody upon my sonnet. Yet 'lucus a non lucendo' were a truer derivation. I laughed and thanked you over the parody, and put off writing to you until I had the headache, which forced me to put it off again. . . .

May God bless you, my dear Mr. Boyd. Mr. Savage Landor once said that anybody who could write a parody deserved to be shot; but as he has written one himself

since saying so, he has probably changed his mind. Arabel sends her love.

Ever your affectionate and grateful

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

January 5, 1842 [1843].

My very dear Friend, — My surprise was inexpressible at your utterance of the name. What! Ossian superior as a poet to Homer! Mr. Boyd saying so! Mr. Boyd treading down the neck of Æschylus while he praises Ossian! The fact appears to me that anomalous thing among believers — a miracle without an occasion.

I confess I never, never should have guessed the name; not though I had guessed to Doomsday. In the first place I do not believe in Ossian, and having partially examined the testimony (for I don't pretend to any exact learning about it) I consider him as the poetical *lay figure* upon which Mr. Macpherson dared to cast his personality. There is a sort of phraseology, nay, an identity of occasional phrases, from the antique — but that these so-called Ossianic poems were ever discovered and translated as they stand in their present form, I believe in no wise. As Dr. Johnson wrote to Macpherson, so I would say, 'Mr. Macpherson, I thought you an impostor, and think so still.'

It is many years ago since I looked at Ossian, and I never did much delight in him, as that fact proves. Since your letter came I have taken him up again, and have just finished 'Carthon.' There are beautiful passages in it, the most beautiful beginning, I think, 'Desolate is the dwelling of Moina,' and the next place being filled by that address to the sun you magnify so with praise. But the charm of these things is the *only* charm of all the poems. There is a sound of wild vague music in a monotone — nothing is articulate, nothing *individual*, nothing various. Take away a few poetical phrases from these poems, and they are

colourless and bare. Compare them with the old burning ballads, with a wild heart beating in each. How cold they grow in the comparison! Compare them with Homer's grand breathing personalities, with Æschylus's — nay, but I cannot bear upon my lips or finger the charge of the blasphemy of such comparing, even for religion's sake. . . .

I had another letter from America a few days since, from an American poet of Boston who is establishing a magazine, and asked for contributions from my pen. The Americans are as good-natured to me as if they took me for the high Radical I am, you know.

You won't be angry with me for my obliquity (as you will consider it) about Ossian. You know I always talk sincerely to you, and you have not made me afraid of telling you the truth — that is, *my* truth, the truth of my belief and opinions.

I do not defend much in the 'Idiot Boy.' Wordsworth is a great poet, but he does not always write equally.

And that reminds me of a distinction you suggest between Ossian and Homer. *I* fashion it in this way: Homer sometimes nods, but Ossian *makes his readers nod.*

Ever your affectionate

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Did I tell you that I had been reading through a manuscript translation of the 'Gorgias' of Plato, by Mr. Hyman of Oxford, who is a stepson of Mr. Haydon's the artist? It is an excellent translation with learned notes, but it is *not elegant.* He means to try the public upon it, but, as I have intimated to him, the Christians of the present day are not civilized enough for Plato.

Arabel's love.

To H. S. Boyd

[About the end of January 1843.]

My very dear Friend, — The image you particularly admire in Ossian, I admire with you, although I am not sure that

I have not seen it or its like somewhere in a classical poet, Greek or Latin. Perhaps Lord Byron remembered it when in the 'Siege of Corinth' he said of his Francesca's uplifted arm, 'You might have seen the moon shine through.' It reminds me also that Maclise the artist, a man of poetical imagination, gives such a transparency to the ghost of Banquo in his picture of Macbeth's banquet, that we can discern through it the lights of the festival. That is good poetry for a painter, is it not?

I send you the magazines which I have just received from America, and which contain, one of them, 'The Cry of the Human,' and the other, four of my sonnets. My correspondent tells me that the 'Cry' is considered there one of the most successful of my poems, but you probably will not think so. Tell me exactly what you do think. At page 343 of 'Graham's Magazine,' *Editor's Table*, is a review of me, which, however extravagant in its appreciation, will give your kindness pleasure. I confess to a good deal of pleasure myself from these American courtesies, expressed not merely in the magazines, but in the newspapers; a heap of which has been sent to me by my correspondent — the 'New York Tribune,' 'The Union,' 'The Union Flag,' &c. — all scattered over with extracts from my books and benignant words about their writer. Among the extracts is the whole of the review of Wordsworth from the London 'Athenæum,' an unconscious compliment, as they do not guess at the authorship, and one which you won't thank them for. Keep the magazines, as I have duplicates.

Dearest Mr. Boyd, since you admit that I am not prejudiced about Ossian, I take courage to tell you what I am thinking of.

I am thinking (this is said in a whisper, and in confidence — of two kinds), *I am thinking that you don't admire him quite as much as you did three weeks ago.*

Ever most affectionately yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Arabel not being here, I send her love without asking for it.

To Mrs. Martin

January 30, 1843.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Thank you for your letter and for dear Mr. Martin's thought of writing one! Ah! *I* thought he would not write, but not for the reason you say; it was something more palpable and less romantic! Well, I will not grumble any more about not having my letter, since you are coming, and since you seem, my dear Mrs. Martin, something in better spirits than your note from Southampton bore token of. Madeira is the Promised Land, you know; and you should hope hopefully for your invalid from his pilgrimage there. You should hope with those who hope, my dearest Mrs. Martin. . . .

Our 'event' just now is a new purchase of a 'Holy Family,' supposed to be by Andrea del Sarto. It has displaced the Glover over the chimney-piece in the drawing-room, and dear Stormie and Alfred nearly broke their backs in carrying it upstairs for me to see before the placing. It is probably a fine picture, and I seem to see my way through the dark of my ignorance, to admire the grouping and colouring, whatever doubt as to the expression and divinity may occur otherwise. Well, you will judge. I won't tell you *how* I think of it. And you won't care if I do. There is also a new very pretty landscape piece, and you may imagine the local politics of the arrangement and hanging, with their talk and consultation; while *I*, on the storey higher, have my arranging to manage of my pretty new books and my three hyacinths, and a pot of primroses which dear Mr. Kenyon had the good nature to carry himself through the streets to our door. But all the flowers forswear me, and die either suddenly or gradually as soon as they become aware of the want of fresh air and light in my room. Talking of air and light, what exquisite weather this is! What a summer in winter! It is the fourth day since I

have had the fire wrung from me by the heat of temperature, and I sit here *very warm indeed*, notwithstanding that bare grate. Nay, yesterday I had the door thrown open for above an hour, and was warm still! You need not ask, you see, how I am.

Tell me, have you read Mr. Dickens's 'America;' and what is your thought of it like? If I were an American, it would make me rabid, and certain of the free citizens *are* furious, I understand, while others 'speak peace and ensue it,' admire as much of the book as deserves any sort of admiration, and attribute the blameable parts to the prejudices of the party with whom the writer 'fell in,' and not to a want of honesty or brotherhood in his own intentions. I admire Mr. Dickens as an imaginative writer, and I love the Americans — I cannot possibly admire or love this book. Does Mr. Martin? Do *you?*

Henrietta would send her love to you if I could hear her voice nearer than I do actually, as she sings to the guitar downstairs. And her love is not the only one to be sent. Give mine to dear Mr. Martin, though he can't make up his mind to the bore of writing to me. And remember us all, both of you, as we do you.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, your affectionate BA.

To James Martin

February 6, 1843.

You make us out, my dear Mr. Martin, to be such perfect parallel lines that I should be half afraid of completing the definition by our never meeting, if it were not for what you say afterwards, of the coming to London, and of promising to come and see Flush. If you should be travelling while I am writing, it was only what happened to me when I wrote not long ago to dearest Mrs. Martin, and everybody in this house cried out against the fatuity of the coincidence. As if I could know that she was travelling, when nobody told me, and I wasn't a witch! If the same thing happens to-day,

believe in the innocence of my ignorance. I shall be consoled if it does — for certain reasons. But for none in the world can I help thanking you for your letter, which gave me so much pleasure from the first sight of the handwriting to the thought of the kindness spent upon me in it, that after all I cannot thank you as I would.

Yet I won't let you fancy me of such an irrational state of simplicity as not to be fully aware that *you*, with your 'nature of the fields and forests,' look down disdainfully and with an inward heat of glorying, upon *me* who have all my pastime in books — dead and seethed. Perhaps, if it were a little warmer, I might even grant that you are right in your pride. As it is, I grumble feebly to myself something about the definition of *nature*, and how we in the town (which 'God made' just as He made your hedges) have *our* share of nature too; and then I have secret thoughts of the state of the thermometer, and wonder how people can breathe out of doors. In the meantime, Flush, who is a better philosopher, pushes deep into my furs, and goes to sleep. Perhaps I should fear the omen for my correspondent.

Oh yes! That picture in 'Boz' is beautiful. For my own part, and by a natural womanly contradiction, I have never cared so much in my life for flowers as since being shut out from gardens — unless, indeed, in the happy days of old when I had a garden of my own, and cut it out into a great Hector of Troy, in relievo, with a high heroic box nose and shoeties of columbine.[1] But that was long ago. Now I count the buds of my primrose with a new kind of interest, and you never saw such a primrose! I begin to believe in Ovid, and look for a metamorphosis. The leaves are turning white and springing up as high as corn. Want of air, and of sun, I suppose. I should be loth to think it — want of friendship to *me!*

Do you know that the royal Boz lives close to us, three doors from Mr. Kenyon in Harley Place? The new

[1] See 'Hector in the Garden' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 37).

numbers appear to me admirable, and full of life and blood — whatever we may say to the thick rouging and extravagance of gesture. There is a beauty, a tenderness, too, in the organ scene, which is worthy of the gilliflowers. But my admiration for 'Boz' fell from its 'sticking place,' I confess, a good furlong, when I read Victor Hugo; and my creed is, that, *not* in his tenderness, which is as much his own as his humour, but in his serious powerful Jew-trial scenes, he has followed Hugo closely, and never scarcely looked away from 'Les Trois Jours d'un Condamné.'

If you should not be on the road, I hope you won't be very long before you are, and that dearest Mrs. Martin will put off building her greenhouse — you see I believe she *will* build it — until she gets home again.

How kind of you and of her to have poor old Mrs. Barker at Colwall!

Do believe me, both of you, with love from all of *us*,

Very affectionately yours,

BA.

To H. S. Boyd

February 21, 1843.

Thank you, my very dear friend, I am as well as the east wind will suffer me to be; and *that*, indeed, is not very well, my heart being fuller of all manner of evil than is necessary to its humanity. But the wind is changed, and the frost is gone, and it is not quite out of my fancy yet that I may see you next summer. *You and summer are not out of the question yet.* Therefore, you see, I cannot be very deep in tribulation. But you may consider it a bad symptom that I have just finished a poem of some five hundred lines in stanzas, called "The Lost Bower,"[1] and about nothing at all in particular.

As to Arabel, she is not an icicle. There are flowers which blow in the frost — when we brambles are brown with their inward death — and she is of them, dear thing. *You*

[1] *Poetical Works*, iii. 105.

are not a bramble, though, and I hope that when you talk of 'feeling the cold,' you mean simply to refer to your sensation, and not to your health. Remember also, dearest Mr. Boyd, what a glorious winter we have had. Take away the last ten days and a few besides, and call the whole summer rather than winter. Ought we to complain, really? Really, no.

I venture another prophecy upon the shoulders of the last, though my hand shakes so that nobody will read it.

You can't abide my 'Cry of the Human,' and four sonnets. They have none of them found favor in your eyes.

In or out of favor,

Ever your affectionate E. B. B.

Do you think that next summer you *might, could,* or *would* walk across the park to see me — supposing always that I fail in my aspiration to go and see you? I only ask by way of *hypothesis.* Consider and revolve it so. We live on the verge of the town rather than in it, and our noises are cousins to silence; and you should pass into a room where the silence is most absolute. Flush's breathing is my loudest sound, and then the watch's tickings, and then my own heart when it beats too turbulently. Judge of the quiet and the solitude!

To H. S. Boyd

April 19, 1843.

My very dear Friend, — The earth turns round, to be sure, and we turn with it, but I never anticipated the day and the hour for *you* to turn round and be guilty of high treason to our Greeks. I cry *'Ai! ai!'* as if I were a chorus, and all vainly. For, you see, arguing about it will only convince you of my obstinacy, and not a bit of Homer's supremacy. Ossian has wrapt you in a cloud, a fog, a true Scotch mist. You have caught cold in the critical faculty, perhaps. At any rate, I can't see a bit more of your reasonableness than I can see of Fingal. *Sic transit!*

Homer like the darkened half of the moon in eclipse! You have spoilt for me now the finest image in your Ossian-Macpherson.

My dearest Mr. Boyd, you will find as few believers in the genuineness of these volumes among the most accomplished antiquarians in poetry as in the genuineness of Chatterton's Rowley, and of Ireland's Shakespeare. The latter impostures boasted of disciples in the first instance, but the discipleship perished by degrees, and the place thereof, during this present 1843, knows it no more. So has it been with the belief in Macpherson's Ossian. Of those who believed in the poems at the first sight of them, who kept his creed to the end? And speaking so, I speak of Macpherson's contemporaries whom you respect.

I do not consider Walter Scott a great poet, but he was highly accomplished in matters of political antiquarianism, and is certainly citable as an authority on this question.

Try not to be displeased with me. I cannot conceal from you that my astonishment is profound and unutterable at your new religion — your new faith in this pseud-Ossian — and your desecration, in his service, of the old Hellenic altars. And by the way, my own figure reminds me to inquire of you whether you are not sometimes struck with a *want* in him — a want very grave in poetry, and very strange in antique poetry — the want of devotional feeling and conscience of God. Observe, that all antique poets rejoice greatly and abundantly in their divine mythology; and that if this Ossian be both antique and godless, he is an exception, a discrepancy, a monster in the history of letters and experience of humanity. As such I leave him.

Oh, how angry you will be with me. But you seemed tolerably prepared in your last letter for my being in a passion. . . .

Ever affectionately yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

Why should I be angry with Flush? *He* does not believe in Ossian. Oh, I assure you he doesn't.

The following letter was called forth by a criticism of Mr. Kenyon's on Miss Barrett's poem, *The Dead Pan*, which he had seen in manuscript; but it also meets some criticisms which others had made upon her last volume (see above, p. 65).

To John Kenyon

Wimpole Street: March 25, 1843.

My very dear Cousin, — Your kindness having touched me much, and your good opinion, whether literary or otherwise, being of great price to me, it is even with tears in my eyes that I begin to write to you upon a difference between us. And what am I to say? To admit, of course, in the first place, the injuriousness to the 'popularity,' of the scriptural tone. But am I to sacrifice a principle to popularity? Would you advise me to do so? should I be more worthy of your kindness by doing so? and could you (apart from the kindness) call my refusal to do so either perverseness or obstinacy? Even if you could, I hope you will try a little to be patient with me, and to forgive, at least, what you find it impossible to approve.

My dear cousin, if you had not reminded me of Wordsworth's exclamation —

> I would rather be
> A pagan, suckled in a creed outworn —

and if he had never made it, I do think that its significance would have occurred to me, by a sort of instinct, in connection with this discussion. Certainly *I* would rather be a pagan whose religion was actual, earnest, continual — for week days, work days, and song days — than I would be a *Christian* who, from whatever motive, shrank from hearing or uttering the name of Christ out of a 'church.' I am no fanatic, but I like truth and earnestness in all things, and I cannot choose but believe that such a Christian shows but ill beside such a pagan. What pagan poet ever thought of casting his gods out of his poetry?

In what pagan poem do they not shine and thunder? And if *I*—to approach the point in question—if *I*, writing a poem the end of which is the extolment of what I consider to be Christian truth over the pagan myths, shrank even *there* from naming the name of my God lest it should not meet the sympathies of some readers, or lest it should offend the delicacies of other readers, or lest, generally, it should be unfit for the purposes of poetry, in what more forcible manner than by that act (I appeal to Philip against Philip) can I controvert my own poem, or secure to myself and my argument a logical and unanswerable shame? If Christ's name is improperly spoken in that poem, then indeed is Schiller right, and the true gods of poetry are to be sighed for mournfully. For be sure that *Burns* was right, and that a poet without devotion is below his own order, and that poetry without religion will gradually lose its elevation. And then, my dear friend, we do not live among dreams. The Christian religion is true or it is not, and if it is true it offers the highest and purest objects of contemplation. And the poetical faculty, which expresses the highest moods of the mind, passes naturally to the highest objects. Who can separate these things? Did Dante? Did Tasso? Did Petrarch? Did Calderon? Did Chaucer? Did the poets of our best British days? Did any one of these shrink from speaking out Divine names when the occasion came? Chaucer, with all his jubilee of spirit and resounding laughter, had the name of Jesus Christ and God as frequently to familiarity on his lips as a child has its father's name. You say 'our religion is not vital—not week-day—enough.' Forgive me, but *that* is a confession of a wrong, not an argument. And if a poet be a poet, it is his business to work for the elevation and purification of the public mind, rather than for his own popularity; while if he be not a poet, no sacrifice of self-respect will make amends for a defective faculty, nor *ought* to make amends.

My conviction is that the *poetry of Christianity* will one day be developed greatly and nobly, and that in the meantime we are wrong, poetically as morally, in desiring to restrain it. No, I never felt repelled by any Christian phraseology in Cowper — although he is not a favorite poet of mine from other causes — nor in Southey, nor even in James Montgomery, nor in Wordsworth where he writes 'ecclesiastically,' nor in Christopher North, nor in Chateaubriand, nor in Lamartine.

It is but two days ago since I had a letter — and not from a fanatic — to reproach my poetry for not being Christian enough, and this is not the first instance, nor the second, of my receiving such a reproach. I tell you this to open to you the possibility of another side to the question, which makes, you see, a triangle of it!

Can you bear with such a long answer to your letter, and forbear calling it a 'preachment'? There may be such a thing as an awkward and untimely introduction of religion, I know, and I have possibly been occasionally guilty in this way. But for *my principle* I must contend, for it is a poetical principle *and more*, and an entire sincerity in respect to it is what I owe to you and to myself. Try to forgive me, dear Mr. Kenyon. I would propitiate your indulgence for me by a libation of your own eau de Cologne poured out at your feet! It is excellent eau de Cologne, and you are very kind to me, but, notwithstanding all, there is a foreboding within me that my 'conventicle-isms' will be inodorous to your nostrils.

[*Incomplete.*]

To John Kenyon

Tuesday [about March 1843].

My very dear Cousin, — I have read your letter again and again, and feel your kindness fully and earnestly. You have advised me about the poem,[1] entering into the ques-

[1] 'The Dead Pan' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 280).

tions referring to it with the warmth rather of the author of it than the critic of it, and this I am sensible of as absolutely as anyone can be. At the same time, I have a strong perception rather than opinion about the poem, and also, if you would not think it too serious a word to use in such a place, I have a *conscience* about it. It was not written in a desultory fragmentary way, the last stanzas thrown in, as they might be thrown out, but with a *design*, which leans its whole burden on the last stanzas. In fact, the last stanzas were in my mind to say, and all the others presented the mere avenue to the end of saying them. Therefore I cannot throw them out — I cannot yield to the temptation even of pleasing *you* by doing so; I make a compromise with myself, and *do not throw them out, and do not print the poem*. Now say nothing against this, my dear cousin, because I am obstinate, as you know, as you have good evidence for knowing. I *will not* either alter or print it. Then you have your manuscript copy, which you can cut into any shape you please as long as you keep it out of print; and seeing that the poem really does belong to you, having had its origin in your paraphrase of Schiller's stanzas, I see a great deal of poetical justice in the manuscript copyright remaining in your hands. For the rest I shall have quite enough to print and to be responsible for without it, and I am quite satisfied to let it be silent for a few years until either I or you (as may be the case even with *me*!) shall have revised our judgments in relation to it.

This being settled, you must suffer me to explain (for mere personal reasons, and not for the good of the poem) that no mortal priest (of St. Peter's or otherwise) is referred to in a particular stanza, but the Saviour Himself, Who is 'the High Priest of our profession,' and the only 'priest' recognised in the New Testament. In the same way the altar candles are altogether spiritual, or they could not be supposed, even by the most amazing poetical exaggeration, to 'light the earth and skies.' I explain this, only that I

may not appear to you to have compromised the principle of the poem, by compromising any truth (such in my eyes) for the sake of a poetical effect.

And now I will not say any more. I know that you will be inclined to cry, 'Print it in any case,' but I will entreat of your kindness, which I have so much right to trust in while entreating, *not to say one such word. Be kind, and let me follow my own way silently.* I have not, indeed, like a spoilt child in a fret, thrown the poem up because I would not alter it, though you have done much to spoil me. I act advisedly, and have made up my mind as to what is the wisest and best thing to do, and personally the pleasantest to myself, after a good deal of serious reflection. 'Pan is dead,' and so best, for the present at least.

I shall take your advice about the preface in every respect, and thanks for the letter and Taylor's memoirs.

Miss Mitford talks of coming to town for a day, and of bringing Flush with her, as soon as the weather settles, and to-day looks so like it that I have mused this morning on the possibility of breaking my prison doors and getting into the next room. Only there is a forbidding north wind, they say.

Don't be vexed with me, dear Mr. Kenyon. You know there are obstinacies in the world as well as mortalities, and thereto appertaining. And then you will perceive through all mine, that it is difficult for me to act against your judgment so far as to put my own tenacity into print.

Ever gratefully and affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

It is to the honour of America that it recognised from the first the genius of Miss Barrett; and for a large part of her life some of the closest of her personal and literary connections were with Americans. The same is true in both respects of Robert Browning. As appears from some letters printed farther on in these volumes, at a time when

the sale of his poems in England was almost infinitesimal, they were known and highly prized in the United States. Expressions of Mrs. Browning's sympathy with America and of gratitude for the kindly feelings of Americans recur frequently in the letters, and it is probable that there are still extant in the States many letters written to friends and correspondents there. Only three or four such have been made available for the present collection; and of these the first follows here in its place in the chronological sequence. It was written to Mr. Cornelius Mathews, then editor of 'Graham's Magazine,' who had invited Miss Barrett to send contributions to his periodical. The warm expression in it of sympathy with the poetry of Robert Browning, whom she did not yet know personally, is especially interesting to readers of this later day, who, like the spectators at a Greek tragedy, watch the development of a drama of which the *dénouement* is already known to them.

To Cornelius Mathews

50 Wimpole Street: April 28, 1843.

My dear Mr. Mathews, — In replying to your kind letter I send some more verse for Graham's, praying such demi-semi-gods as preside over contributors to magazines that I may not appear over loquacious to my editor. Of course it is not intended to thrust three or four poems into one number. My pluralities go to you simply to 'bide your time,' and be used one by one as the opportunity is presented. In the meanwhile you have received, I hope, a short letter written to explain my unwillingness to apply, as you desired me at first, to Wiley and Putnam — an unwillingness justified by what you told me afterwards. I did not apply, nor have I applied, and I would rather not apply at all. Perhaps I shall hear from them presently. The pamphlet on International Copyright is welcome at a distance, but it has not come near me yet; and for all your kindness in

relation to the prospective gift of your works I thank you again and earnestly. You are kind to me in many ways, and I would willingly know as much of your intellectual habits as you teach me of your genial feelings. This 'Pathfinder' (what an excellent name for an American journal!) I also owe to you, with the summing up of your performances in it, and with a notice of Mr. Browning's 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' which would make one poet furious (the 'infelix Talfourd') and another a little melancholy — namely, Mr. Browning himself. There is truth on both sides, but it seems to me hard truth on Browning. I do assure you I never saw him in my life — do not know him even by correspondence — and yet, whether through fellow-feeling for Eleusinian mysteries, or whether through the more generous motive of appreciation of his powers, I am very sensitive to the thousand and one stripes with which the assembly of critics doth expound its vocation over him, and the 'Athenæum,' for instance, made me quite cross and misanthropical last week.[1] The truth is — and the world should know the truth — it is easier to find a more faultless writer than a poet of equal genius. Don't let us fall into the category of the sons of Noah. Noah was once drunk, indeed, but once he built the ark. Talking of poets, would your 'Graham's Miscellany' care at all to have occasional poetical contributions from Mr. Horne? I am in correspondence with him, and I think I could manage an arrangement upon the same terms as my engagement rests on, if you please and your friends please, that is, and without formality, if it should give you any pleasure. He is a writer of great power, I think. And this reminds me that you may be looking all the while for the 'Athenæum's'

[1] The *Athenæum* of April 22 contained a review of Browning's 'Dramatic Lyrics,' charging him with taking pleasure in being enigmatical, and declaring this to be a sign of weakness, not strength. It spoke of many of the pieces composing the volume as being rather fragments and sketches than having any right to independent existence.

reply to your friend's proposition — of which I lost no time in apprising the editor, Mr. Dilke, and here are some of his words: 'An American friend who had been long in England, and often conversed with me on the subject, resolved on his return to establish such a correspondence. In all things worth knowing — all reviews of good books' (which 'are published first or simultaneously,' says Mr. Dilke, 'in London'), 'he was anticipated, and after some months he was driven of necessity to geological surveys, centenary celebrations, progress of railroads, manufactures, &c., and thus the prospect was abandoned altogether.' Having made this experiment, Mr. Dilke is unwilling to risk another. Neither must we blame him for the reserve. When the international copyright shall at once protect the national *meum* and *tuum* in literature and give it additional fullness and value, we shall cease to say insolently to you that what we want of your books we will get without your help, but as it is, the Mr. Dilkes of us having nothing much more courteous to do. I wish I could have been of any use to your friend — I have done what I could. In regard to critical papers of mine, I would willingly give myself up to you, seeing your good nature; but it is the truth that I never published any prose papers at all except the series on the Greek Christian poets and the other series on the English poets in the 'Athenæum' of last year, and both of which you have probably seen. Afterwards I threw up my brief and went back to my poetry, in which I feel that I must do whatever I am equal to doing at all. That life is short and art long appears to us more true than usual when we lie all day long on a sofa and are as frightened of the east wind as if it were a tiger. Life is not only short, but uncertain, and art is not only long, but absorbing. What have I to do with writing '*scandal*' (as Mr. Jones would say) upon my neighbour's work, when I have not finished my own? So I threw up my brief into Mr. Dilke's hands, and went back to my

verses. Whenever I print another volume you shall have it, if Messrs. Wiley and Putnam will convey it to you. How can I send you, by the way, anything I may have to send you? Why will you not, as a nation, embrace our great penny post scheme, and hold our envelopes in all acceptation? You do not know — cannot guess — what a wonderful liberty our Rowland Hill has given to British spirits, and how we '*flash* a thought' instead of 'wafting' it from our extreme south to our extreme north, paying 'a penny for our thought' and for the electricity included. I recommend you our penny postage as the most successful revolution since the 'glorious three days' of Paris.

And so, you made merry with my scorn of my 'Prometheus.' Believe me — believe me absolutely — I did not strike that others might spare, but from an earnest remorse. When you know me better, you will know, I hope, that I am *true*, whether right or wrong, and you know already that I am right in this thing, the only merit of the translation being its closeness. Can I be of any use to you, dear Mr. Mathews? When I can, make use of me. You surprise and disappoint me in your sketch of the Boston poet, for the letter he wrote to me struck me as frank and honest. I wonder if he made any use of the verses I sent him; and I wonder what I sent him — for I never made a note of it, through negligence, and have quite forgotten. Are you acquainted with Mrs. Sigourney? She has offended us much by her exposition of Mrs. Southey's letter, and I must say not without cause. I rejoice in the progress of 'Wakondah,' wishing the influences of mountain and river to be great over him and in him. And so I will say the 'God bless you' your kindness cares to hear, and remain,

Sincerely and thankfully yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

(*Endorsed in another hand*)
E. B. Barrett, London, received May 12, 1843,
4 poems, previously furnished to *Graham's Magazine*, $50.

To John Kenyon

May 1, 1843.

My dear Cousin, — Here is my copy-right for you, and you will see that I have put 'word' instead of 'sound,' as certainly the proper 'word.' Do let me thank you once more for all the trouble and interest you have taken with me and in me. Observe besides that I have altered the title according to your unconscious suggestion, and made it 'The Dead Pan,' which is a far better name, I think, than the repetition of the *refrain*.

But I spoil my exemplary docility so far, by confessing that I don't like 'scornful children' half — no, not half so well as my 'railing children,' although, to be sure, you proved to me that the last was nigh upon nonsense. You proved it — that is, you almost proved it, for don't we say — at least, *mightn't* we say — 'the thunder was silent'? '*thunder*' involving the idea of noise, as much as 'railing children' do. Consider this — I give it up to you.[1]

I am ashamed to have kept Carlyle so long, but I quite failed in trying to read him at my usual pace — he *won't* be read quick. After all, and full of beauty and truth as that book is, and strongly as it takes hold of my sympathies, there is nothing new in it — not even a new Carlyleism, which I do not say by way of blaming the book, because the author of it might use words like the apostle's: 'To write the same things unto you, to me indeed is not grievous, and to you it is safe.' The world being blind and deaf and rather stupid, requires a reiteration of certain uncongenial truths. . . .

Thank you for the address.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

[1] Mr. Kenyon's view evidently prevailed, for stanza 19 now has 'scornful children.'

I observe that the *most questionable rhymes* are not objected to by Mr. Merivale; also — but this letter is too long already.

To Mrs. Martin

May 3, 1843.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — If *you* promised (which you did), *I* ought to have promised — and therefore we may ask each other's pardon. . . .

How is the dog? and how does dear Mr. Martin find himself in Arcadia? Do we all stand in his recollection like a species of fog, or a concentrated essence of brick wall? How I wish — and since I said it aloud to you I have often wished it over in a whisper — that you would put away your romance, or cut it in two, and spend six months of the year in London with us! Miss Mitford believes that wishes, if wished hard enough, realise themselves, but my experience has taught me a less cheerful creed. Only if wishes *do* realise themselves!

Miss Mitford is at Bath, where she has spent one week and is about to spend two, and then goes on her way into Devonshire. She amused me so the other day by desiring me to look at the date of Mr. Landor's poems in their first edition, because she was sure that it must be fifty years since, and she finds him at this 1843, the very Lothario of Bath, enchanting the wives, making jealous the husbands, and 'enjoying,' altogether, the worst of reputations. I suggested that if she proved him to be seventy-five, as long as he proved himself enchanting, it would do no manner of good in the way of practical ethics; and that, besides, for her to travel round the world to investigate gentlemen's ages was invidious, and might be alarming as to the safe inscrutability of ladies' ages. She is delighted with the *scenery of Bath*, which certainly, take it altogether, marble and mountains, is the most beautiful town I ever looked

upon. Cheltenham, I think, is a mere commonplace to it, although the avenues are beautiful, to be sure. . . .

Mrs. Southey complains that she has lost half her income by her marriage, and her friend Mr. Landor is anxious to persuade, by the means of intermediate friends, Sir Robert Peel to grant her a pension. She is said to be in London now, and has at least left Keswick for ever. It is not likely that Wordsworth should come here this year, which I am sorry for now, although I should certainly be sorry if he did come. A happy state of contradiction, not confined either to that particular movement or no-movement, inasmuch as I was gratified by his sending me the poem you saw, and yet read it with such extreme pain as to incapacitate me from judging of it. Such stuff we are made of!

This is a long letter — and you are tired, I feel by instinct!

May God bless you, my dearest Mrs. Martin. Give my love to Mr. Martin, and think of me as

Your very affectionate

Ba.

Henry and Daisy have been to see the *lying in state*, as lying stark and dead is called whimsically, of the Duke of Sussex. It was a fine sight, they say.

To H. S. Boyd

May 9, 1843 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — I thank you much for the copies of your 'Anti-Puseyistic Pugilism.' The papers reached my hands quite safely and so missed setting the world on fire; and I shall be as wary of them evermore (be sure) as if they were gunpowder. Pray send them to Mary Hunter. Why not? Why should you think that I was likely to 'object' to your doing so? She will laugh.

I laughed, albeit in no smiling mood; for I have been transmigrating from one room to another, and your packet found me half tired and half excited, and *whole* grave. But I could not choose but laugh at your Oxford charge; and when I had counted your great guns and javelin points and other military appurtenances of the Pun-ic war, I said to myself — or to Flush, 'Well, Mr. Boyd will soon be back again with the dissenters.' Upon which I think Flush said, 'That's a comfort.'

Mary's direction is, 111 London Road, Brighton. You ought to send the verses to her yourself, if you mean to please her entirely: and I cannot agree with you that there is the slightest danger in sending them by the post. Letters are never opened, unless you tempt the flesh by putting sovereigns, or shillings, or other metallic substances inside the envelope; and if the devil entered into me causing me to write a libel against the Queen, I would send it by the post fearlessly from John o' Groat's to Land's End inclusive.

One of your best puns, if not the best,

> Hatching succession apostolical,
> With other falsehoods diabolical,

lies in an octosyllabic couplet; and what business has *that* in your heroic libel?

The 'pearl' of maidens sends her love to you.

Your very affectionate

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

May 14, 1843.

My very dear Friend, — I hear with wonder from Arabel of your repudiation of my word 'octosyllabic' for the two lines in your controversial poem. Certainly, if you count the syllables on your fingers, there are ten syllables in each line: of *that* I am perfectly aware; but the lines are none the less belonging to the species of versification called

octosyllabic. Do you not observe, my dearest Mr. Boyd, that the final accent and rhyme fall on the eighth syllable instead of the tenth, and that *that* single circumstance determines the class of verse — that they are in fact octosyllabic verses with triple rhymes?

> Hatching succession apostolical,
> With other falsehoods diabolical.

Pope has double rhymes in his heroic verses, but how does he manage them? Why, he admits eleven syllables, throwing the final accent and rhyme on the tenth, thus:

> Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow,
> The rest is nought but leather and prunella.

Again, if there is a double rhyme to an octosyllabic verse, there are always *nine* syllables in that verse, the final accent and rhyme falling on the eighth syllable, thus:

> Compound for sins that we're inclined to,
> By damning those we have no mind to.
>
> ('Hudibras.')

Again, if there is a triple rhyme to an octosyllabic verse (precisely the present case) there must always be ten syllables in that verse, the final accent and rhyme falling on the eighth syllable; thus from 'Hudibras' again:

> Then in their robes the penitentials
> Are straight presented with credentials.
> Remember how in arms and politics,
> We still have worsted all your holy tricks.

You will admit that these last couplets are precisely of the same structure as yours, and certainly they are octosyllabics, and made use of by Butler in an octosyllabic poem, whereas yours, to be rendered of the heroic structure, should run thus:

> Hatching at ease succession apostolical,
> With many other falsehoods diabolical.

I have written a good deal about an oversight on your part of little consequence; but as you charged me with a mistake

made in cold blood and under corrupt influences from Lake-mists, why I was determined to make the matter clear to you. And as to the *influences*, if I were guilty of this mistake, or of a thousand mistakes, Wordsworth would not be guilty *in* me. I think of him now, exactly as I thought of him during the first years of my friendship for you, only with *an equal* admiration. He was a great poet to me always, and always, while I have a soul for poetry, will be so; yet I said, and say in an under-voice, but steadfastly, that Coleridge was the grander genius. There is scarcely anything newer in my estimation of Wordsworth than in the colour of my eyes!

Perhaps I was wrong in saying 'a *pun*.' But I thought I apprehended a double sense in your application of the term 'Apostolical succession' to Oxford's 'breeding' and 'hatching,' words which imply succession in a way unecclesiastical.

After all which quarrelling, I am delighted to have to talk of your coming nearer to me — within reach — almost within my reach. Now if I am able to go in a carriage at all this summer, it will be hard but that I manage to get across the park and serenade you in Greek under your window.

Your ever affectionate

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

To H. S. Boyd

May 18, 1843.

My very dear Friend, — Yes, you have surprised me!

I always have thought of you, and I always think and say, that you are truthful and candid in a supreme degree, and therefore it is not your candour about Wordsworth which surprises me.

He had the kindness to send me the poem upon Grace Darling when it first appeared; and with a curious mixture of feelings (for I was much gratified by his attention in

sending it) I yet read it with so much pain from the nature of the subject, that my judgment was scarcely free to consider the poetry — I could scarcely determine to myself what I *thought* of it from feeling too much.

But I do confess to you, my dear friend, that I suspect — through the mist of my sensations — the poem in question to be very inferior to his former poems; I confess that the impression left on my mind is, of its decided inferiority, and I have heard that the poet's friends and critics (all except *one*) are mourning over its appearance; sighing inwardly, 'Wordsworth is old.'

One thing is clear to me, however, and over *that* I rejoice and triumph greatly. If you can esteem this poem of 'Grace Darling,' you must be susceptible to the grandeur and beauty of the poems which preceded it; and the cause of your past reluctance to recognise the poet's power must be, as I have always suspected, from your having given a very partial attention and consideration to his poetry. You were partial in your attention; *I*, perhaps, was injudicious in my extracts; but with your truth and his genius, I cannot doubt but that the time will come for your mutual amity. Oh that I could stand as a herald of peace, with my wool-twisted fillet! I do not understand the Greek metres as well as you do, but I understand Wordsworth's genius better, and do you forgive that it should console me.

I will ask about his collegian extraction. Such a question never occurred to me. Apollo taught him under the laurels, while all the Muses looked through the boughs.

Your ever affectionate

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

Oh, yes, it delights me that you should be nearer. Of course you know that Wordsworth is Laureate.[1]

[1] Wordsworth was nominated Poet Laureate after the death of Southey in March 1843.

To John Kenyon

May 19, 1843.

Thank you, my dear cousin, for all your kindness to me. There is ivy enough for a thyrsus, and I almost feel ready to enact a sort of Bacchus triumphalis 'for jollitie,' as I see it already planted, and looking in at me through the window. I never thought to see such a sight as *that* in my London room, and am overwhelmed with my own glory.

And then Mr. Browning's note! Unless you say 'nay' to me, I shall keep this note, which has pleased me so much, yet not more than it ought. *Now*, I forgive Mr. Merivale for his hard thoughts of my easy rhymes. But all this pleasure, my dear Mr. Kenyon, I owe to *you*, and shall remember that I do.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

May 26, 1843.

. . . I thank you for your part in the gaining of my bed, dearest Mrs. Martin, most earnestly; and am quite ready to believe that it was gained by *wishdom*, which believing is wisdom! No, you would certainly never recognise my prison if you were to see it. The bed, like a sofa and no bed; the large table placed out in the room, towards the wardrobe end of it; the sofa rolled where a sofa should be rolled — opposite the arm-chair: the drawers crowned with a coronal of shelves fashioned by Sette and Co. (of papered deal and crimson merino) to carry my books; the washing table opposite turned into a cabinet with another coronal of shelves; and Chaucer's and Homer's busts in guard over these two departments of English and Greek poetry; three more busts consecrating the wardrobe which there was no annihilating; and the window — oh, I must take a new paragraph for the window, I am out of breath.

In the window is fixed a deep box full of soil, where are *springing up* my scarlet runners, nasturtiums, and convolvuluses, although they were disturbed a few days ago by the revolutionary insertion among them of a great ivy root with trailing branches so long and wide that the top tendrils are fastened to Henrietta's window of the higher storey, while the lower ones cover all my panes. It is Mr. Kenyon's gift. He makes the like to flourish out of mere flowerpots, and embower his balconies and windows, and why shouldn't this flourish with me? But certainly — there is no shutting my eyes to the fact that it does droop a little. Papa prophesies hard things against it every morning, 'Why, Ba, it looks worse and worse,' and everybody preaches despondency. I, however, persist in being sanguine, looking out for new shoots, and making a sure pleasure in the meanwhile by listening to the sound of the leaves against the pane, as the wind lifts them and lets them fall. Well, what do you think of my ivy? Ask Mr. Martin, if he isn't jealous already.

Have you read 'The Neighbours,' Mary Howitt's translation of Frederica Bremer's Swedish? Yes, perhaps. Have you read 'The Home,' fresh from the same springs? *Do*, if you have not. It has not only charmed me, but made me happier and better: it is fuller of Christianity than the most orthodox controversy in Christendom; and represents to my perception or imagination a perfect and beautiful embodiment of Christian outward life from the inward, purely and tenderly. At the same time, I should tell you that Sette says, 'I might have liked it ten years ago, but it is too young and silly to give me any pleasure now.' For *me*, however, it is not too young, and perhaps it won't be for you and Mr. Martin. As to Sette, he is among the patriarchs, to say nothing of the lawyers — and there we leave him. . . .

Ever your affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

50 Wimpole Street:
Wednesday, or is it Thursday? [summer 1843].

My dear Cousin,—. . . I send you my friend Mr. Horne's new epic,[1] and beg you, if you have an opportunity, to drop it at Mr. Eagles' feet, so that he may pick it up and look at it. I have not gone through it (I have another copy), but it appears to me to be full of fine things. As to the author's fantasy of selling it for a farthing, I do not enter into the secret of it — unless, indeed, he should intend a sarcasm on the age's generous patronage of poetry, which is possible.

To John Kenyon

June 30, 1843.

Thank you, my dear Mr. Kenyon, for the Camden Society books, and also for these which I return; and also for the hope of seeing you, which I kept through yesterday. I honour Mrs. Coleridge for the readiness of reasoning and integrity in reasoning, for the learning, energy, and impartiality which she has brought to her purpose, and I agree with her in many of her objects; and disagree, by opposing her opponents with a fuller front than she is always inclined to do. In truth, I can never see anything in these sacramental ordinances except a prospective sign in one (Baptism), and a memorial sign in the other, the Lord's Supper, and could not recognise either under any modification as a peculiar instrument of grace, mystery, or the like. The tendencies we have towards making mysteries of God's simplicities are as marked and sure as our missing the actual mystery upon occasion. God's

[1] *Orion*, the early editions of which were sold at a farthing, in accordance with a fancy of the author. Miss Barrett reviewed it in the *Athenæum* (July 1843).

love is the true mystery, and the sacraments are only too simple for us to understand. So you see I have read the book in spite of prophecies. After all I should like to cut it in two — it would be better for being shorter — and it might be clearer also. There is, in fact, some dullness and perplexity — a few passages which are, to my impression, contradictory of the general purpose — something which is not generous, about nonconformity — and what I cannot help considering a superfluous tenderness for Puseyism. Moreover she is certainly wrong in imagining that the ante-Nicene fathers did not as a body teach regeneration by baptism — even Gregory Nazianzen, the most spiritual of many, did, and in the fourth century. But, after all, as a work of theological controversy it is very un-bitter and well-poised, gentle, and modest, and as the work of a woman *you* must admire it, and *we* be proud of it — *that* remains certain at last.

Poor Mr. Haydon! I am so sorry for his reverse in the cartoons.[1] It is a thunderbolt to him. I wonder, in the pauses of my regret, whether Mr. Selous is *your* friend — whether 'Boadicea visiting the Druids,' suggested by you, I think, as a subject, is this victorious 'Boadicea' down for a hundred pound prize? You will tell me when you come.

I have just heard an uncertain rumour of the arrival of your brother. If it is not all air, I congratulate you heartily upon a happiness only not past my appreciation.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

I send the copy of 'Orion' for *yourself*, which you asked for. It is in the fourth edition.

[1] This refers to the competition for the cartoons to be painted in the Houses of Parliament, in which Haydon was unsuccessful. The disappointment was the greater, inasmuch as the scheme for decorating the building with historical pictures was mainly due to his initiative.

To Mrs. Martin

July 8, 1843.

Thank you, my dearest Mrs. Martin, for your kind sign of interest in the questioning note, although I will not praise the *stenography* of it. I shall be as brief to-day as you, not quite out of revenge, but because I have been writing to George and am the less prone to activities from having caught cold in an inscrutable manner, and being stiff and sore from head to foot and inclined to be a little feverish and irritable of nerves. No, it is not of the slightest consequence; I tell you the truth. But I would have written to you the day before yesterday if it had not been for this something between cramp and rheumatism, which was rather unbearable at first, but yesterday was better, and is to-day better than better, and to-morrow will leave me quite well, if I may prophesy. I only mention it lest you should have upbraided me for not answering your note in a moment, as it deserved to be answered. So don't put any nonsense into Georgie's head — forgive me for beseeching you! I have been very well — downstairs seven or eight times; lying on the floor in Papa's room; meditating *the chair*, which would have amounted to more than a meditation except for this little contrariety. In a day or two more, if this cool warmth perseveres in serving me, and no Ariel refills me 'with aches,' I shall fulfil your kind wishes perhaps and be out — and so, no more about me! . . . .

Oh, I do believe you think me a Cockney — a metropolitan barbarian! But I persist in seeing no merit and no superior innocence in being shut up even in precincts of rose-trees, away from those great sources of human sympathy and occasions of mental elevation and instruction without which many natures grow narrow, many others gloomy, and perhaps, if the truth were known, very few prosper entirely. It is not that I, who

have always lived a good deal in solitude and live in it still more now, and love the country even painfully in my recollections of it, would decry either one or the other — but solitude is most effective in a contrast, and if you do not break the bark you cannot bud the tree, and, in short (not to be *in long*), I could write a dissertation, which I will spare you, 'about it and about it.' . . .

Tell George to lend you — nay, I think I will be generous and let him give you, although the author gave me the book — the copy of the new epic, 'Orion,' which he has with him. You have probably observed the advertisement, and are properly instructed that Mr. Horne the poet, who has sold three editions already at a farthing a copy, and is selling a fourth at a shilling, and is about to sell a fifth at half a crown (on the precise principle of the aërial machine — launching himself into popularity by a first impulse on the people), is my unknown friend, with whom I have corresponded these four years without having seen his face. Do you remember the beech leaves sent to me from Epping Forest? Yes, you must. Well, the sender is the poet, and the poem I think a very noble one, and I want you to think so too. So hereby I empower you to take it away from George and keep it for my sake — if you will!

Dear Mr. Martin was so kind as to come and see me as you commanded, and I must tell you that I thought him looking so better than well that I was more than commonly glad to see him. Give my love to him, and join me in as much metropolitan missionary zeal as will bring you both to London for six months of the year. Oh, I wish you would come! Not that it is necessary for *you*, but that it will be *so* good for *us*.

My ivy is growing, and I have *green blinds*, against which there is an outcry. They say that I do it out of envy, and for the equalisation of complexions.

Ever your affectionate,

Ba.

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street : August 1843.

Dear Mr. Westwood, — I thank you very much for the kindness of your questioning, and am able to answer that notwithstanding the, as it seems to you, fatal significance of a woman's silence, I am alive enough to be sincerely grateful for any degree of interest spent upon me. As to Flush, he should thank you too, but at the present moment he is quite absorbed in finding a cool place in this room to lie down in, having sacrificed his usual favorite place at my feet, his head upon them, oppressed by the torrid necessity of a thermometer above 70. To Flopsy's acquaintance he would aspire gladly, only hoping that Flopsy does not 'delight to bark and bite,' like dogs in general, because if he does Flush would as soon be acquainted with a *cat*, he says, for he does not pretend to be a hero. Poor Flush! 'the bright summer days on which I am ever likely to take him out for a ramble over hill and meadow' are never likely to shine! But he follows, or rather leaps into my wheeled chair, and forswears merrier company even now, to be near me. I am a good deal better, it is right to say, and look forward to a possible prospect of being better still, though I may be shut out from climbing the Brocken otherwise than in a vision.

You will see by the length of the 'Legend'[1] which I send to you (in its only printed form) *why* I do not send it to you in manuscript. Keep the book as long as you please. My new volume is not yet in the press, but I am writing more and more in a view to it, pleased with the thought that some kind hands are already stretched out in welcome and acceptance of what it may become. Not as idle as I appear, I have also been writing some fugitive verses for American magazines. This is my confession. Forgive

[1] *The Lay of the Brown Rosary.*

its tediousness, and believe me thankfully and very sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street: September 2, 1843.

Dear Mr. Westwood, — Your letter comes to remind me how much I ought to be ashamed of myself. . . . I received the book in all safety, and read your kind words about my 'Rosary' with more grateful satisfaction than appears from the evidence. It is great pleasure to me to have written for such readers, and it is great hope to me to be able to write for them. The transcription of the 'Rosary' is a compliment which I never anticipated, or you should have had the manuscript copy you asked for, although I have not a perfect one in my hands. The poem is full of faults, as, indeed, all my poems appear to myself to be when I look back upon them instead of looking down. I hope to be worthier in poetry some day of the generous appreciation which you and your friends have paid me in advance.

Tennyson is a great poet, I think, and Browning, the author of 'Paracelsus,' has to my mind very noble capabilities. Do you know Mr. Horne's 'Orion,' the poem published for a farthing, to the wonder of booksellers and bookbuyers who could not understand 'the speculation in its eyes'? There are very fine things in this poem, and altogether I recommend it to your attention. But what is 'wanting' in Tennyson? He can think, he can feel, and his language is highly expressive, characteristic, and harmonious. I am very fond of Tennyson. He makes me thrill sometimes to the end of my fingers, as only a true great poet can.

You praise me kindly, and if, indeed, the considerations you speak of could be true of me, I am not one who could lament having 'learnt in suffering what I taught in song.' In any case, working for the future and counting gladly on

those who are likely to consider any work of mine acceptable to themselves, I shall be very sure not to forget my friends at Enfield.

Dear Mr. Westwood, I remain sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To Mrs. Martin

September 4, 1843. Finished September 5.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — . . . . I have had a great gratification within this week or two in receiving a letter — nay, two letters — from Miss Martineau, one of the last strangers in the world from whom I had any right to expect a kindness. Yet most kind, most touching in kindness, were both of these letters, so much so that I was not far from crying for pleasure as I read them. She is very hopelessly ill, you are probably aware, at Tynemouth in Northumberland, suffering agonies from internal cancer, and conquering occasional repose by the strength of opium, but 'almost forgetting' (to use her own words) 'to wish for health, in the intense enjoyment of pleasures independent of the body.' She sent me a little work of hers called 'Traditions of Palestine.' Her friends had hoped by the stationary character of some symptoms that the disease was suspended, but lately it is said to be gaining ground, and the serenity and elevation of her mind are more and more triumphantly evident as the bodily pangs thicken. . . .

And now I am going to tell you what will surprise you, if you do not know it already. Stormie and Georgie are passing George's vacation on the Rhine. You are certainly surprised if you did not know it. Papa signed and sealed them away on the ground of its being good and refreshing for both of them, and I was even mixed up a little with the diplomacy of it, until I found *they were going*, and then it was a hard, terrible struggle with me to be calm and see them go. But *that* was childish, and when I had heard

from them at Ostend I grew more satisfied again, and attained to think less of the fatal influences of *my star*. They went away in great spirits, Stormie 'quite elated,' to use his own words, and then at the end of the six weeks they *must* be at home at Sessions; and no possible way of passing the interim could be pleasanter and better and more exhilarating for themselves. The plan was to go from Ostend by railroad to Brussels and Cologne, then to pass down the Rhine to Switzerland, spend a few days at Geneva, and a week in Paris as they return. The only fear is that Stormie won't go to Paris. We have too many friends there — a strange obstacle.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, I am doing something more than writing you a letter, I think.

May God bless you all with the most enduring consolations! Give my love to Mr. Martin, and believe also, both of you, in my sympathy. I am glad that your poor Fanny should be so supported. May God bless her and all of you!

Dearest Mrs. Martin's affectionate,

BA.

I am very well for *me*, and was out in the chair yesterday.

To H. S. Boyd

September 8, 1843.

My very dear Friend, — I ask you humbly not to fancy me in a passion whenever I happen to be silent. For a woman to be silent is ominous, I know, but it need not be significant of anything quite so terrible as ill-humour. And yet it always happens so; if I do not write I am sure to be cross in your opinion. You set me down directly as 'hurt,' which means *irritable;* or 'offended,' which means *sulky;* your ideal of me having, in fact, 'its finger in its eye' all day long.

I, on the contrary, humbled as I was by your hard

criticism of my soft rhymes about Flush,[1] waited for Arabel to carry a message for me, begging to know whether you would care at all to see my 'Cry of the Children'[2] before I sent it to you. But Arabel went without telling me that she was going: twice she went to St. John's Wood and made no sign; and now I find myself thrown on my own resources. Will you see the 'Cry of the Human'[3] or not? It will not please you, probably. It wants melody. The versification is eccentric to the ear, and the subject (the factory miseries) is scarcely an agreeable one to the fancy. Perhaps altogether you had better not see it, because I know you think me to be deteriorating, and I don't want you to have farther hypothetical evidence of so false an opinion. Humbled as I am, I say 'so false an opinion.' Frankly, if not humbly, I believe myself to have gained power since the time of the publication of the 'Seraphim,' and lost nothing except happiness. Frankly, if not humbly!

With regard to the 'House of Clouds'[4] I disagree both with you and Miss Mitford, thinking it, comparatively with my other poems, neither so bad nor so good as you two account it. It has certainly been singled out for great praise both at home and abroad, and only the other day Mr. Horne wrote to me to reproach me for not having mentioned it to him, because he came upon it accidentally and considered it 'one of my best productions.' Mr. Kenyon holds the same opinion. As for Flush's verses, they are what I call cobweb verses, thin and light enough;

[1] 'To Flush, my dog' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 19).

[2] Published in *Blackwood's Magazine* for August 1843, and called forth by Mr. Horne's report as assistant commissioner on the employment of children in mines and manufactories.

[3] Evidently a slip of the pen for 'Children.'

[4] *Poetical Works*, iii. 186. Mr. Boyd's opinion of it may be learnt from Miss Barrett's letter to Horne, dated August 31, 1843 (*Letters to R. H. Horne*, i. 84): 'Mr. Boyd told me that he had read my papers on the Greek Fathers with the more satisfaction because he had inferred from my "House of Clouds" that illness had *impaired my faculties*.'

and Arabel was mistaken in telling you that Miss Mitford gave the prize to them. Her words were, 'They are as tender and true as anything you ever wrote, but nothing is equal to the "House of Clouds."' Those were her words, or to that effect, and I refer to them to you, not for the sake of Flush's verses, which really do not appear even to myself, their writer, worth a defence, but for the sake of *your* judgment of *her* accuracy in judging.

Lately I have received two letters from the profoundest woman thinker in England, Miss Martineau — letters which touched me deeply while they gave me pleasure I did not expect.

My poor Flush has fallen into tribulation. Think of Catiline, the great savage Cuba bloodhound belonging to this house, attempting last night to worry him just as the first Catiline did Cicero. Flush was rescued, but not before he had been wounded severely; and this morning he is on three legs and in great depression of spirits. My poor, poor Flushie! He lies on my sofa and looks up to me with most pathetic eyes.

Where is Annie? If I send my love to her, will it ever be found again?

May God bless you both!

Dearest Mr. Boyd's affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

Monday, September 19, 1843.

My own dear Friend, — I should have written instantly to explain myself out of appearances which did me injustice, only I have been in such distress as to have no courage for writing. Flush was stolen away, and for three days I could neither sleep nor eat, nor do anything much more rational than cry. *Confiteor tibi*, oh reverend father. And if you call me very silly, I am so used to the reproach throughout the week as to be hardened to the point of vanity. The

worst of it is, now, that there will be no need of more 'Houses of Clouds' to prove to you the deterioration of my faculties. Q.E.D.

In my own defence, I really believe that my distress arose somewhat less from the mere separation from dear little Flushie than from the consideration of how he was breaking his heart, cast upon the cruel world. Formerly, when he has been prevented from sleeping on my bed he has passed the night in moaning piteously, and often he has refused to eat from a strange hand. And then he loves me, heart to heart; there was no exaggeration in my verses about him, if there was no poetry. And when I heard that he cried in the street and then vanished, there was little wonder that I, on my part, should cry in the house.

With great difficulty we hunted the dog-banditti into their caves of the city, and bribed them into giving back their victim. Money was the least thing to think of in such case; I would have given a thousand pounds if I had had them in my hand. The audacity of the wretched men was marvellous. They said that they had been 'about stealing Flush these two years,' and warned us plainly to take care of him for the future.

The joy of the meeting between Flush and me would be a good subject for a Greek ode — I recommend it to you. It might take rank next to the epical parting of Hector and Andromache. He dashed up the stairs into my room and into my arms, where I hugged him and kissed him, black as he was — black as if imbued in a distillation of St. Giles's. Ah, I can break jests about it *now*, you see. Well, to go back to the explanations I promised to give you, I must tell you that Arabel *perfectly forgot* to say a word to me about 'Blackwood' and your wish that I should send the magazine. It was only after I heard that you had procured it yourself, and after I mentioned this to her, that she remembered her omission all at once. Therefore I am quite vexed and disappointed, I beg you to believe — *I*, who have pleasure

in giving you any printed verses of mine that you care to have. Never mind! I may print another volume before long, and lay it at your feet. In the meantime, you *endure* my 'Cry of the Children' better than I had anticipated — just because I never anticipated your being able to read it to the end, and was over-delicate of placing it in your hands on that very account. My dearest Mr. Boyd, you are right in your complaint against the rhythm. The first stanza came into my head in a hurricane, and I was obliged to make the other stanzas like it — *that* is the whole mystery of the iniquity. If you look Mr. Lucas from head to foot, you will never find such a rhythm on his person. The whole crime of the versification belongs to *me*. So blame *me*, and by no means another poet, and I will humbly confess that I deserve to be blamed in some *measure*. There is a roughness, my own ear being witness, and I give up the body of my criminal to the rod of your castigation, kissing the last as if it were Flush.

A report runs in London that Mr. Boyd says of Elizabeth Barrett: 'She is a person of the most perverted judgment in England.' Now, if this be true, I shall not mend my evil position in your opinion, my very dear friend, by confessing that I differ with you, the more the longer I live, on the ground of what you call 'jumping lines.' I am speaking not of particular cases, but of the principle, the general principle, of these cases, and the tenacity of my judgment does not arise from the teaching of 'Mr. Lucas,' but from the deeper study of the old master-poets — English poets — those of the Elizabeth and James ages, before the corruption of French rhythms stole in with Waller and Denham, and was acclimated into a national inodorousness by Dryden and Pope. We differ so much upon this subject that we must proceed by agreeing to differ, and end, perhaps, by finding it agreeable to differ; there can be no possible use in an argument. Only you must be upright in justice, and find Wordsworth innocent of misleading me. So far from having read him more within these three years, I have

read him *less*, and have taken no new review, I do assure you, of his position and character as a poet, and these facts are testified unto by the other fact that my poetry, neither in its best features nor its worst, is adjusted after the fashion of his school.

But I am writing too much; you will have no patience with me. 'The Excursion' is accused of being lengthy, and so you will tell me that I convict myself of plagiarism, *currente calamo*.

I have just finished a poem of some eight hundred lines, called 'The Vision of Poets,'[1] philosophical, allegorical — anything but popular. It is in stanzas, every one an octosyllabic triplet, which you will think odd, and I have not *sanguinity* enough to defend.

May God bless you, my dearest Mr. Boyd! Yes, I heard — I was glad to hear — of your having resumed that which used to be so great a pleasure to you — Miss Marcus's society. I remain,

Affectionately and gratefully yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

My love to dear Annie.

To Mr. Westwood

October 1843.

. . . . . .

You are probably right in respect to Tennyson, for whom, with all my admiration of him, I would willingly secure more exaltation and a broader clasping of truth. Still, it is not possible to have so much beauty without a certain portion of truth, the position of the Utilitarians being true in the inverse. But I think as I did of 'uses' and 'responsibilities,' and do hold that the poet is a preacher and must look to his doctrine.

Perhaps Mr. Tennyson will grow more solemn, like the sun, as his day goes on. In the meantime we have the noble 'Two Voices,' and, among other grand intimations of a

[1] *Poetical Works*, i. 223.

teaching power, certain stanzas to J. K. (I think the initials are) on the death of his brother,[1] which very deeply affected me.

Take away the last stanzas, which should be applied more definitely to the *body*, or cut away altogether as a lie against eternal verity, and the poem stands as one of the finest of monodies. The nature of human grief never surely was more tenderly intimated or touched — it brought tears to my eyes. Do read it. He is not a Christian poet, up to this time, but let us listen and hear his next songs. He is one of God's singers, whether he knows it or does not know it.

. . . . . .

I am thinking, lifting up my pen, what I can write to you which is likely to be interesting to you. After all I come to chaos and silence, and even old night — it is growing so dark. I live in London, to be sure, and except for the glory of it I might live in a desert, so profound is my solitude and so complete my isolation from things and persons without. I lie all day, and day after day, on the sofa, and my windows do not even look into the street. To abuse myself with a vain deceit of rural life I have had ivy planted in a box, and it has flourished and spread over one window, and strikes against the glass with a little stroke from the thicker leaves when the wind blows at all briskly. *Then* I think of forests and groves; it is my triumph when the leaves strike the window pane, and this is not a sound like a lament. Books and thoughts and dreams (almost too consciously *dreamed*, however, for me — the illusion of them has almost passed) and domestic tenderness can and ought to leave nobody lamenting. Also God's wisdom, deeply steeped in His love, *is* as far as we can stretch out our hands.

[1] The lines 'To J. S.,' which begin :

'The wind that beats the mountain blows
More softly round the open wold.'

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street : December 26, 1843.

Dear Mr. Westwood, — You think me, perhaps, and not without apparent reason, ungrateful and insensible to your letter, but indeed I am neither one nor the other, and I am writing now to try and prove it to you. I was much touched by some tones of kindness in the letter, and it was welcome altogether, and I did not need the 'owl' which came after to waken me, because I was wide awake enough from the first moment; and now I see that you have been telling your beads, while I seemed to be telling nothing, in that dread silence of mine. May all true saints of poetry be propitious to the wearer of the 'Rosary.'

In answer to a question which you put to me long ago on the subject of books of theology, I will confess to you that, although I have read rather widely the divinity of the Greek Fathers, Gregory, Chrysostom, and so forth, and have of course informed myself in the works generally of our old English divines, Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, and so forth, I am not by any means a frequent reader of books of theology as such, and as the men of our times have made them. I have looked into the 'Tracts' from curiosity and to hear what the world was talking of, and I was disappointed *even* in the degree of intellectual power displayed in them. From motives of a desire of theological instruction I very seldom read any book except God's own. The minds of persons are differently constituted; and it is no praise to mine to admit that I am apt to receive less of what is called edification from human discourses on divine subjects, than disturbance and hindrance. I read the Scriptures every day, and in as simple a spirit as I can; thinking as little as possible of the controversies engendered in that great sunshine, and as much as possible of the heat and glory belonging to it It is a sure fact in my eyes that we do not require so much *more knowledge*, as a stronger

apprehension, by the faith and affections, of what we already know.

You will be sorry to hear that Mr. Tennyson is not well, although his friends talk of nervousness, and do not fear much ultimate mischief.[1] . . .

It is such a lovely *May* day, that I am afraid of breaking the spell by writing down Christmas wishes.

Very faithfully yours,

Elizabeth Barrett.

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street: December 31, 1843.

. . . . . .

If you do find the paper I was invited to write upon Wordsworth,[2] you will see to which class of your admiring or abhorring friends I belong. Perhaps you will cry out quickly, 'To the blind admirers, certes.' And I have a high admiration of Wordsworth. His spirit has worked a good work, and has freed into the capacity of work other noble spirits. He took the initiative in a great poetic movement, and is not only to be praised for what he has done, but for what he has helped his age to do. For the rest, Byron has more passion and intensity, Shelley more fancy and music, Coleridge could see further into the unseen, and not one of those poets has insulted his own genius by the production of whole poems, such as I could name of Wordsworth's, the vulgarity of which is childish, and the childishness vulgar. Still, the wings of his genius are wide enough to cast a shadow over its feet, and our gratitude should be stronger than our critical acumen. Yes,

[1] About the same date she writes to Horne (*Letters to R. H. Horne*, i. 86): 'I am very glad to hear that nothing really very bad is the matter with Tennyson. If anything were to happen to Tennyson, the world should go into mourning.'

[2] In the *Athenæum*.

I *will* be a blind admirer of Wordsworth's. I *will* shut my eyes and be blind. Better so, than see too well for the thankfulness which is his due from me. . . .

Yes, I mean to print as much as I can find and make room for, 'Brown Rosary' and all. I am glad you liked 'Napoleon,'[1] but I shall be more glad if you decide when you see this new book that I have made some general progress in strength and expression. Sometimes I rise into hoping that I may have done so, or may do so still more.

The poet's work is no light work. His wheat will not grow without labour any more than other kinds of wheat, and the sweat of the spirit's brow is wrung by a yet harder necessity. And, thinking so, I am inclined to a little regret that you should have hastened your book even for the sake of a sentiment. Now you will be angry with me. . . .

There are certain difficulties in the way of the critic unprofessional, as I know by experience. Our most sweet voices are scarcely admissible among the most sour ones of the regular brotherhood. . . .

Harriet Martineau is quite well, 'trudging miles together in the snow,' when the snow was, and in great spirits. Wordsworth is to be in London in the spring. Tennyson is dancing the polka and smoking cloud upon cloud at Cheltenham. Robert Browning is meditating a new poem, and an excursion on the Continent. Miss Mitford came to spend a day with me some ten days ago; sprinkled, as to the soul, with meadow dews. Am I at the end of my account? I think so.

Did you read 'Blackwood'? and in that case have you had deep delight in an exquisite paper by the Opium-eater, which my heart trembled through from end to end? What a poet that man is! how he vivifies words, or deepens them, and gives them profound significance. . . .

I understand that poor Hood is supposed to be dying

[1] 'Crowned and Buried' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 9).

— really dying, at last. Sydney Smith's last laugh mixes with his, or nearly so. But Hood had a deeper heart, in one sense, than Sydney Smith, and is the material of a greater man.

And what are you doing? Writing — reading — or musing of either? Are you a reviewer-man — in opposition to the writer? Once, reviewing was my besetting sin, but now it is only my frailty. Now that I lie here at the mercy of every reviewer, I save myself by an instinct of self-preservation from that 'gnawing tooth' (as Homer and Æschylus did rightly call it) and spring forward into definite work and thought. Else, I should perish. Do you understand that? If you are a reviewer-man you will, and if not, you must set it down among those mysteries of mine which people talk of as profane.

May God bless you, &c. &c.

ELIZABETH BARRETT.

To Mr. Westwood

[Undated.]

. . . . . .

You know as well as I do how the plague of rhymers, and of bad rhymes, is upon the land, and it was only three weeks ago that, at a 'Literary Institute' at Brighton, I heard of the Reverend somebody Stoddart gravely proposing 'Poetry for the Million' to his audience; he assuring them that 'poets made a mystery of their art,' but that in fact nothing except an English grammar, and a rhyming dictionary, and some instruction about counting on the fingers, was necessary in order to make a poet of any man!

This is a fact. And to this extent has the art, once called divine, been desecrated among the educated classes of our country.

Very sincerely yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT.

Besides the poems, to which reference has been made in the above letters, Miss Barrett was engaged, during the year 1843, in co-operating with her friend Mr. Horne in the production of his great critical enterprise, 'The New Spirit of the Age.' In this the much daring author undertook no less a task than that of passing a sober and serious judgment on his principal living comrades in the world of letters. Not unnaturally he ended by bringing a hornet's nest about his ears — alike of those who thought they should have been mentioned and were not, and of those who were mentioned but in terms which did not satisfy the good opinion of themselves with which Providence had been pleased to gift them. The volumes appeared under Horne's name alone, and he took the whole responsibility; but he invited assistance from others, and in particular used the collaboration of Miss Barrett to no small extent. She did not indeed contribute any complete essay to his work; but she expressed her opinion, when invited, on several writers, in a series of elaborate letters, which were subsequently worked up by Horne into his own criticisms.[1] The secret of her co-operation was carefully kept, and she does not appear to have suffered any of the evil consequences of his indiscretions, real or imagined. Another contribution from her consisted of the suggestion of mottoes appropriate to each writer noticed at length; and in this work she had an unknown collaborator in the person of Robert Browning. So ends the somewhat uneventful year of 1843.

[1] Her contributions to the essays on Tennyson and Carlyle have recently been printed in Messrs. Nichols and Wise's *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, i. 33, ii. 105.

CHAPTER IV

1844–1846

The year 1844 marks an important epoch in the life of Mrs. Browning. It was in this year that, as a result of the publication of her two volumes of 'Poems,' she won her general and popular recognition as a poetess whose rank was with the foremost of living writers. It was six years since she had published a volume of verse: and in the meanwhile she had been gaining strength and literary experience. She had tried her wings in the pages of popular periodicals. She had profited by the criticisms on her earlier work, and by intercourse with men of letters; and though her defects in literary art were by no means purged away, yet the flights of her inspiration were stronger and more assured. The result is that, although the volumes of 1844 do not contain absolutely her best work — no one with the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' in his mind can affirm so much as that — they contain that which has been most generally popular, and which won her the position which for the rest of her life she held in popular estimation among the leaders of English poetry.

The principal poem in these two volumes is the 'Drama of Exile.' Of the genesis of this work, Miss Barrett gives the following account in a letter to Horne, dated December 28, 1843:

'A volume full of manuscripts had been ready for more than a year, when suddenly, a short time ago, when I fancied I had no heavier work than to make copy and corrections, I fell

upon a fragment of a sort of masque on 'The First Day's Exile from Eden' — or rather it fell upon me, and beset me till I would finish it.'[1]

At one time it was intended to use its name as the title to the two volumes; but this design was abandoned, and they appeared under the simple description of 'Poems, by Elizabeth Barrett Barrett.' The 'Vision of Poets' comes next in length to the 'Drama;' and among the shorter pieces were several which rank among her best work, 'The Cry of the Children,' 'Wine of Cyprus,' 'The Dead Pan,' 'Bertha in the Lane,' 'Crowned and Buried,' 'The Mourning Mother,' and 'The Sleep,' together with such popular favourites as 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship,' 'The Romaunt of the Page,' and 'The Rhyme of the Duchess May.' Since the publication of 'The Seraphim' volume, the new era of poetry had developed itself to a notable extent. Tennyson had published the best of his earlier verse, 'Locksley Hall,' 'Ulysses,' the 'Morte d'Arthur,' 'The Lotus Eaters,' 'A Dream of Fair Women,' and many more; Browning had issued his wonderful series of 'Bells and Pomegranates,' including 'Pippa Passes,' 'King Victor and King Charles,' 'Dramatic Lyrics,' 'The Return of the Druses,' and 'The Blot on the 'Scutcheon;' and it was among company such as this that Miss Barrett, by general consent, now took her place.

To Mrs. Martin

January 8, 1844.

Thank you again and again, my dearest Mrs. Martin, for your flowers, and the verses which gave them another perfume. The 'incense of the heart' lost not a grain of its perfume in coming so far, and not a leaf of the flowers was ruffled, and to see such gorgeous colours all on a sudden at Christmas time was like seeing a vision, and almost made

[1] *Letters to R. H. Horne*, ii. 146.

Flush and me rub our eyes. Thank you, dearest Mrs. Martin; how kind of you! The grace of the verses and the brightness of the flowers were too much for me altogether. And when George exclaimed, 'Why, she has certainly laid bare her greenhouse,' I had not a word to say in justification of myself for being the cause of it.

Papa admired the branch of Australian origin so much that he walked all over the house with it. Beautiful it is indeed; but my eyes turn back to the camellias. I do believe that I like to look at a camellia better than at a rose; and then *these* have a double association. . . .

I meant to write a long letter to you to-day, but Mr. Kenyon has been to see me and cut my time short before post time. You remember, perhaps, how his brother married a German, and, after an exile of many years in Germany, returned last summer to England to settle. Well, he can't bear us any longer! His wife is growing paler and paler with the pressure of English social habits, or rather unsocial habits; and he himself is a German at heart; and besides, being a man of a singularly generous nature, and accustomed to give away in handfuls of silver and gold one-third of every year's income, he dislikes the social obligation of *spending* it here. So they are going back. Poor Mr. Kenyon! I am full of sympathy with him. This returning to England was a dream of all last year to him. He gave up his house to the new comers, and bought a new one; and talked of the brightness secured to his latter years by the presence of his only remaining near relative; and I see that, for all his effort towards a bright view of the matter, he is disappointed — very. Should you suppose that four hundred pounds in Vienna go as far as a thousand in England? I should never have fancied it.

You shall hear from me, my dearest Mrs. Martin, in another few days; and I send this as it is, just because I am benighted by the post hour, and do not like to pass your kindness with even one day's apparent neglect.

May God bless you and dear Mr. Martin. The kindest wishes for the long slope of coming year, and for the many, I trust, beyond it, belong to you from the deepest of our hearts.

But shall you not be coming — setting out — very soon, before I can write again?

Your affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

[? January 1844.]

I am so sorry, dear Mr. Kenyon, to hear — which I did, last night, for the first time — of your being unwell. I had hoped that to-day would bring a better account, but your note, with its next week prospect, is disappointing. The 'ignominy' would have been very preferable — to us, at least, particularly as it need not have lasted beyond to-day, dear Georgie being quite recovered, and at his law again, and no more symptoms of small-pox in anybody. We should all be well, if it were not for me and my cough, which is better, but I am not quite well, nor have yet been out.

A letter came to me from dear Miss Mitford a few days since, which I had hoped to talk to you about. Some of the subject of it is Mr. Kenyon's '*only fault*,' which ought, of course, to be a large one to weigh against the multitudinous ones of other people, but which seems to be: 'He has the habit of walking in without giving notice. He thinks it saves trouble, whereas in a small family, and at a distance from a town, the effect is that one takes care to be provided for the whole time that one expects him, and then, by some exquisite ill luck, on the only day when one's larder is empty, in he comes!' And so, if you have not written to interrupt her in this process of indefinite expectation, the 'only fault' will, in her eyes, grow, as it ought, as large as fifty others.

I do hope, dear Mr. Kenyon, soon to hear that you are

better — and well — and that your course of prophecy may not run smooth all through next week.

Very truly yours,

E. BARRETT.

Saturday.

To John Kenyon

Saturday night [about March 1844].

I return Mr. Burges's criticism, which I omitted to talk to you of this morning, but which interested me much in the reading. Do let him understand how obliged to him I am for permitting me to look, for a moment, according to his view of the question. Perhaps my poetical sense is not convinced all through, and certainly my critical sense is not worth convincing, but I am delighted to be able to call by the name of Æschylus, under the authority of Mr. Burges, those noble electrical lines (electrical for double reasons) which had struck me twenty times as Æschylean, when I read them among the recognised fragments of Sophocles. You hear Æschylus's footsteps and voice in the lines. No other of the gods could tread so heavily, or speak so like thundering.

I wrote all this to begin with, hesitating how else to begin. My very dear and kind friend, you understand — do you not? — through an expression which, whether written or spoken, must remain imperfect, to what a deep, full feeling of gratitude your kindness has moved me.[1] The good you have done me, and just at the moment when I should have failed altogether without it, and in more than one way, and in a deeper than the obvious degree — all this I know better than you do, and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart. I shall never forget it, as long as I live to remember anything. The book may fail signally after all — *that* is

[1] Referring to Mr. Kenyon's encouraging comments on the 'Drama of Exile,' which he had seen in manuscript at a time when Miss Barrett was very despondent about it.

another question; but *I* shall not fail, to begin with, and *that* I owe to *you*, for I was falling to pieces in nerves and spirits when you came to help me. I had only enough instinct left to be ashamed, a little, afterwards, of having sent you, in company, too, with Miss Martineau's heroic cheerfulness, that note of weak because unavailing complaint. It was a long compressed feeling breaking suddenly into words. Forgive and forget that I ever so troubled you — no, 'troubled' is not the word for your kindness! — and remember, as I shall do, the great good you have done me.

May God bless you, my dear cousin.

Affectionately yours always,

E. B. B.

This note is not to be answered.

I am thinking of writing to Moxon, as there does not seem much to arrange. The type and size of Tennyson's books seem, upon examination, to suit my purpose excellently.

To John Kenyon

March 21, 1844.

No, you never sent me back Miss Martineau's letter, my dear cousin; but you will be sure, or rather Mr. Crabb Robinson will, to find it in some too safe a place; and then I shall have it. In the meantime here are the other letters back again. You will think that I was keeping them for a deposit, a security, till I 'had my ain again,' but I have only been idle and busy together. They are the most interesting that can be, and have quite delighted me. By the way, *I*, who saw nothing to object to in the 'Life in the Sick Room,' object very much to her argument in behalf of it — an argument certainly founded on a miserable misapprehension of the special doctrine referred to in her letter. There is nothing so elevating and ennobling to the nature and mind of man as

the view which represents it raised into communion with God Himself, by the justification and purification of God Himself. Plato's dream brushed by the gate of this doctrine when it walked highest, and won for him the title of 'Divine.' That it is vulgarised sometimes by narrow-minded teachers in theory, and by hypocrites in action, might be an argument (if admitted at all) against all truth, poetry, and music!

On the other hand, I was glad to see the leaning on the Education question; in which all my friends the Dissenters did appear to me so painfully wrong and so unworthily wrong at once.

And Southey's letters! I did quite delight in *them!* They are more *personal* than any I ever saw of his; and have more warm every-day life in them.

The particular Paul Pry in question (to come down to *my* life) never 'intrudes.' It is his peculiarity. And I put the stop exactly where I was bid; and was going to put Gabriel's speech,[1] only — with the pen in my hand to do it — I found that the angel was a little too exclamatory altogether, and that he had cried out, 'O ruined earth!' and 'O miserable angel!' just before, approaching to the habit of a mere caller of names. So I altered the passage otherwise; taking care of your full stop after 'despair.' Thank you, my dear Mr. Kenyon.

Also I sent enough manuscript for the first sheet, and a note to Moxon yesterday, last night, thanking him for his courtesy about Leigh Hunt's poems; and following your counsel in every point. 'Only last night,' you will say! But I have had *such* a headache — and some very painful vexation in the prospect of my maid's leaving me, who has been with me throughout my illness; so that I am much attached to her, with the best reasons for being so, while the idea of a stranger is scarcely tolerable to me under my actual circumstances.

[1] In the 'Drama of Exile,' near the beginning (*Poetical Works*, i. 7).

The 'Palm Leaves'[1] are full of strong thought and good thought — thought expressed excellently well; but of poetry, in the true sense, and of imagination in any, I think them bare and cold — somewhat wintry leaves to come from the East, surely, surely!

May the change of air be rapid in doing you good — the weather seems to be softening on purpose for you. May God bless you, dear Mr. Kenyon, I never can thank you enough. When you return I shall be rustling my 'proofs' about you, to prove my faith in your kindness.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

March 22, 1844.

My dearest Mr. Boyd, — I heard that once I wrote three times too long a letter to you; I am aware that nine times too long a silence is scarcely the way to make up for it. Forgive me, however, as far as you can, for every sort of fault. When I once begin to write to you, I do not know how to stop; and I have had so much to do lately as scarcely to know how to begin to write to you. *Hence these* faults — not quite tears — in spite of my penitence and the quotation.

At last my book is in the press. My great poem (in the modest comparative sense), my 'Masque of Exile' (as I call it at last[2]), consists of some nineteen hundred or two thousand lines, and I call it 'Masque of *Exile*' because it refers to Lucifer's exile, and to that other mystical exile of the Divine Being which was the means of the return homewards of my Adam and Eve. After the exultation of boldness of composition, I fell into one of my deepest fits of despondency, and at last, at the end of most painful

[1] By Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton.

[2] There was, however, a still later last, when it became the 'Drama of Exile.'

vacillations, determined not to print it. Never was a manuscript so near the fire as my 'Masque' was. I had not even the instinct of applying for help to anybody. In the midst of this Mr. Kenyon came in by accident, and asked about my poem. I told him that I had given it up, despairing of my republic. In the kindest way he took it into his hands, and proposed to carry it home and read it, and tell me his impression. 'You know,' he said, 'I have a prejudice against these sacred subjects for poetry, but then I have another prejudice *for you*, and one may neutralise the other.' The next day I had a letter from him with the returned manuscript — a letter which I was absolutely certain, before I opened it, would counsel *against* the publication. On the contrary! His impression is clearly in favour of the poem, and, while he makes sundry criticisms on minor points, he considers it very superior as a whole to anything I ever did before — more sustained, and fuller in power. So my nerves are braced, and I grow a man again; and the manuscript, as I told you, is in the press. Moreover, you will be surprised to hear that I think of bringing out *two volumes of poems* instead of one, by advice of Mr. Moxon, the publisher. Also, the Americans have commanded an American edition, to come out in numbers, either a little before or simultaneously with the English one, and provided with a separate preface for themselves.

There now! I have told you all this, knowing your kindness, and that you will care to hear of it.

It has given me the greatest concern to hear of dear Annie's illness, and I do hope, both for your sake and for all our sakes, that we may have better news of her before long.

But I don't mean to fall into another scrape to-day by writing too much. May God bless you, my very dear friend!

I am ever your affectionate

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

April 1, 1844.

My very dear Friend, — Your kind letter I was delighted to receive. You mistake a good deal the capacities in judgment of 'the man.'[1] The 'man' is highly refined in his tastes, and leaning to the classical (I was going to say to *your* classical, only suddenly I thought of Ossian) a good deal more than I do. He has written satires in the manner of Pope, which admirers of Pope have praised warmly and deservedly. If I had hesitated about the conclusiveness of his judgments, it would have been because of his confessed indisposition towards subjects religious and ways mystical, and his occasional insufficient indulgence for rhymes and rhythms which he calls '*Barrettian*.' But these things render his favourable inclination towards my 'Drama of Exile' still more encouraging (as you will see) to my hopes for it.

Still, I do tremble a good deal inwardly when I come to think of what your own thoughts of my poem, and poems in their two-volume development, may finally be. I am afraid of you. You will tell me the truth as it appears to you — upon *that* I may rely; and I should not wish you to suppress a single disastrous thought for the sake of the unpleasantness it may occasion to me. My own faith is that I have made progress since 'The Seraphim,' only it is too possible (as I confess to myself and you) that your opinion may be exactly contrary to it.

You are very kind in what you say about wishing to have some conversation, as the medium of your information upon architecture, with Octavius — Occy, as we call him. He is very much obliged to you, and proposes, if it should not be inconvenient to you, to call upon you on Friday, with Arabel, at about one o'clock. Friday is mentioned

[1] John Kenyon: see the last letter.

because it is a holiday, no work being done at Mr. Barry's. Otherwise he is engaged every day (except, indeed, Sunday) from nine in the morning to five in the afternoon. May God bless you, dearest Mr. Boyd. I am ever

Your affectionate

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

To Mr. Westwood

April 16, 1844.

. . . Surely, surely, it was not likely I should lean to utilitarianism in the notice on Carlyle, as I remember the writer of that article leans somewhere — *I*, who am reproached with trans-trans-transcendentalisms, and not without reason, or with insufficient reason.

Oh, and I should say also that Mr. Horne, in his kindness, has enlarged considerably in his annotations and reflections on me personally.[1] My being in correspondence with all the Kings of the East, for instance, is an exaggeration, although literary work in one way will bring with it, happily, literary association in others. . . . Still, I am not a great letter writer, and I don't write 'elegant Latin verses,' as all the gods of Rome know, and I have not been shut up in the dark for seven years by any manner of means. By the way, a barrister said to my barrister brother the other day, 'I suppose your sister is dead?' 'Dead?' said he, a little struck; 'dead?' 'Why, yes. After Mr. Horne's account of her being sealed up hermetically in the dark for so many years, one can only calculate upon her being dead by this time.'

Elizabeth Barrett.

Several of the letters to Mr. Boyd which follow refer to that celebrated gift of Cyprus wine which led to the composition of one of Miss Barrett's best known and most quoted poems.

[1] In *The New Spirit of the Age.*

To H. S. Boyd

June 18, 1844.

Thank you, my very dear friend! I write to you drunk with Cyprus. Nothing can be worthier of either gods or demigods; and if, as you say, Achilles did not drink of it, I am sorry for him. I suppose Jupiter had it instead, just then — Hebe pouring it, and Juno's ox-eyes bellowing their splendour at it, if you will forgive me that broken metaphor, for the sake of Æschylus's genius, and my own particular intoxication.

Indeed, there *never was,* in modern days, such wine. Flush, to whom I offered the last drop in my glass, felt it was supernatural, and ran away. I have an idea that if he had drunk that drop, he would have talked afterwards — either Greek or English.

Never was such wine! The very taste of ideal nectar, only stiller, from keeping. If the bubbles of eternity were on it, *we* should run away, perhaps, like Flush.

Still, the thought comes to me, ought I to take it from you? Is it right of me? are you not too kind in sending it? and should you be allowed to be too kind? In any case, you must not think of sending me more than you have already sent. It is more than enough, and I am not less than very much obliged to you.

I have passed the middle of my second volume, and I only hope that critics may say of the rest that it smells of Greek wine. Dearest Mr. Boyd's

Ever affectionate

E. B. Barrett.

To Mr. Westwood

June 28, 1844.

My dear Mr. Westwood, — I have certainly and considerably increased the evidence of my own death by the sepulchral silence of the last few days. But after all I am not dead, not even *at heart,* so as to be insensible to your

kind anxiety, and I can assure you of this, upon very fair authority, neither is the book dead yet. It has turned the corner of the *felo de se*, and if it is to die, it will be by the critics. The mystery of the long delay, it would not be very easy for me to explain, notwithstanding I hear Mr. Moxon says: 'I suppose Miss Barrett is not in a hurry about her publication;' and *I* say: 'I suppose Moxon is not in a hurry about the publication.' There may be a little fault on my side, when I have kept a proof a day beyond the hour, or when 'copy' has put out new buds in my hands as I passed it to the printer's. Still, in my opinion, it is a good deal more the fault of Mr. Moxon's not being in a hurry, than in the excessive virtue of my patience, or vice of my indolence. Miss Mitford says, as you do, that she never heard of so slow-footed a book.

To H. S. Boyd

50 Wimpole Street:
Wednesday, August 1, 1844 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — Have you expected to hear from me? and are you vexed with me? I am a little ambitious of the first item — yet hopeful of an escape from the last. If you did but know how I am pressed for time, and how I have too much to do every day, you would forgive me for my negligence; even if you had sent me nectar instead of mountain,[1] and I had neglected laying my gratitude at your feet. Last Saturday, upon its being discovered that my first volume consisted of only 208 pages, and my second of 280 pages, Mr. Moxon uttered a cry of reprehension, and wished to tear me to pieces by his printers, as the Bacchantes did Orpheus. Perhaps you might have heard my head moaning all the way to St. John's Wood! He wanted to tear away several poems from the end of the

[1] Evidently a reference to the name of some wine (perhaps Montepulciano) sent her by Mr. Boyd. See the end of the letter.

second volume, and tie them on to the end of the first! I could not and would not hear of this, because I had set my mind on having 'Dead Pan' to conclude with. So there was nothing for it but to finish a ballad poem called 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship,' which was lying by me, and I did so by writing, i.e. composing, *one hundred and forty lines last Saturday!*[1] I seemed to be in a dream all day! Long lines too — with fifteen syllables in each! I see you shake your head all this way off. Moreover it is a 'romance of the age,' treating of railroads, routes, and all manner of 'temporalities,' and in so radical a temper that I expect to be reproved for it by the Conservative reviews round. By the way, did I tell you of the good news I had from America the third of this month? The 'Drama of Exile' is in the hands of a New York publisher; and having been submitted to various chief critics of the country on its way, was praised loudly and extravagantly. This was, however, by a *private reading* only. A bookseller at Philadelphia had announced it for publication — he intended to take it up when the English edition reached America; but upon its being represented to him that the New York publisher had proof sheets direct from the author and would give copy money, he abandoned his intention to the other. I confess I feel very much pleased at the kind spirit — the spirit of eager kindness indeed — with which the Americans receive my poetry. It is not wrong to be pleased, I hope. In this country there may be mortifications waiting for me; quite enough to keep my modesty in a state of cultivation. I do not know. I hope the work will be out this week, and *then!* Did I explain to you that what 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' was wanted for was to increase the size of the first volume, so as to restore the equilibrium of volumes, without dislocating 'Pan'! Oh, how anxious I shall be to

[1] It will be observed that this is not quite the same as the current legend, which asserts that the whole poem (of 412 lines) was composed in twelve hours.

hear your opinion! If you tell me that I have lost my intellects, what in the world shall I do *then* — what *shall* I do? My Americans — that is, my Americans who were in at the private reading, and perhaps I myself — are of opinion that I have made great progress since 'The Seraphim.' It seems to me that I have more *reach*, whether in thought or language. But then, to *you* it may appear quite otherwise, and I shall be very melancholy if it does. Only you must tell me the *precise truth;* and I trust to you that you will let me have it in its integrity.

All the life and strength which are in me, seem to have passed into my poetry. It is my *pou sto* — not to move the world; but to live on in.

I must not forget to tell you that there is a poem towards the end of the second volume, called 'Cyprus Wine,' which I have done myself the honor and pleasure of associating with your name. I thought that you would not be displeased by it, as a proof of grateful regard from me.

Talking of wines, the Mountain has its attraction, but certainly is not to be compared to the Cyprus. You will see how I have praised the latter. Well, now I must say 'good-bye,' which you will praise *me* for!

Dearest Mr. Boyd's affectionate

E. B. B.

P.S. — *Nota bene* — I wish to forewarn you that I have cut away in the text, none of my vowels by apostrophes. When I say 'To efface,' wanting two syllable measure, I do not write 'T' efface' as in the old fashion, but 'To efface' full length. This is the style of the day. Also you will find me a little lax perhaps in metre — a freedom which is the result not of carelessness, but of *conviction*, and indeed of much patient study of the great Fathers of English poetry — not meaning Mr. Pope. Be as patient with me as you can. You shall have the volumes as soon as they are ready.

To H. S. Boyd

August 6, 1844.

My very dear Friend, — I cannot be certain, from my recollections, whether I did or did not write to you before, as you suggest; but as you never received the letter and I was in a continual press of different thoughts, the probability is that I did not write. The Cyprus wine in the second vial I certainly *did* receive; and was grateful to you with the whole force of the aroma of it. And now I will tell you an anecdote.

In the excess of my filial tenderness, I poured out a glass for papa, and offered it to him with my right hand.

'*What is this?*' said he.

'*Taste it*,' said I as laconically, but with more emphasis.

He raised it to his lips; and, after a moment, recoiled, with such a face as sinned against Adam's image, and with a shudder of deep disgust.

'Why,' he said, 'what most beastly and nauseous thing is this? Oh,' he said, 'what detestable drug is this? Oh, oh,' he said, 'I shall never, never, get this horrible taste out of my mouth.'

I explained with the proper degree of dignity that 'it was Greek wine, Cyprus wine, and of very great value.'

He retorted with acrimony, that 'it might be Greek, twice over; but that it was exceedingly beastly.'

I resumed, with persuasive argument, that 'it could scarcely be beastly, inasmuch as the taste reminded one of oranges and orange flower together, to say nothing of the honey of Mount Hymettus.'

He took me up with stringent logic, 'that any wine must positively be beastly, which, pretending to be wine, tasted sweet as honey, and that it was beastly on my own showing!' I send you this report as an evidence of a curious opinion. But drinkers of port wine cannot be

expected to judge of nectar — and I hold your 'Cyprus' to be pure nectar.

I shall have pleasure in doing what you ask me to do — that is, I *will* — if you promise never to call me Miss Barrett again. You have often quite vexed me by it. There is Ba — Elizabeth — Elzbeth — Ellie — any modification of my name you may call me by — but I won't be called Miss Barrett by *you*. Do you understand? Arabel means to carry your copy of my book to you. And I beg you not to fancy that I shall be impatient for you to read the two volumes through. If you *ever* read them through, it will be a sufficient compliment, and indeed I do not expect that you *ever will*.

May God bless you, dearest Mr. Boyd.

I remain,

Your affectionate and grateful

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

The date of this last letter marks, as nearly as need be, the date of publication of Miss Barrett's volumes. The letters which follow deal mainly with their reception, first at the hand of friends, and then by the regular critics. The general verdict of the latter was extremely complimentary. Mr. Chorley, in the 'Athenæum,'[1] described the volumes as 'extraordinary,' adding that 'between her [Miss Barrett's] poems and the slighter lyrics of most of the sisterhood, there is all the difference which exists between the putting-on of "singing robes" for altar service, and the taking up lute or harp to enchant an indulgent circle of friends and kindred.' In the 'Examiner,'[2] John Forster declared that 'Miss Barrett is an undoubted poetess of a high and fine order as regards the first requisites of her art — imagination and expression. . . . She is a most remarkable writer, and her volumes contain not a little which the lovers of poetry will

[1] August 24, 1844. [2] October 5, 1844.

never willingly let die,' a phrase then not quite so hackneyed as it has since become. The 'Atlas'[1] asserted that 'the present volumes show extraordinary powers, and, abating the failings of which all the followers of Tennyson are guilty, extraordinary genius.' More influential even than these, 'Blackwood'[2] paid her the compliment of a whole article, criticising her faults frankly, but declaring that 'her poetical merits infinitely outweigh her defects. Her genius is profound, unsullied, and without a flaw.' All agreed in assigning her a high, or the highest, place among the poetesses of England; but, as Miss Barrett herself pointed out, this, in itself, was no great praise.[3]

With regard to individual poems, the critics did not take kindly to the 'Drama of Exile,' and 'Blackwood' in particular criticised it at considerable length, calling it 'the least successful of her works.' The subject, while half challenging comparison with Milton, lends itself only too readily to fancifulness and unreality, which were among the most besetting sins of Miss Barrett's genius. The minor poems were incomparably more popular, and the favourite of all was that masterpiece of rhetorical sentimentality, 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship.' It must have been a little mortifying to the authoress to find this piece, a large part of which had been dashed off at a single heat in order to supply the printers' needs, preferred to others on which she had employed all the labour of her deliberate art; but with the general tone of all the critics she had every reason to be as content as her letters show her to have been. Only two criticisms rankled: the one that she was a follower of Tennyson, the other that her rhymes were slovenly and careless. And these appeared, in varying shapes, in nearly all the reviews.

The former of these allegations is of little weight. Whatever qualities Miss Barrett may have shared with

[1] September 31, 1844. [2] November 1844.
[3] See letter of January 3, 1845.

Tennyson, her substantial independence is unquestionable. It is a case rather of coincidence than imitation; or if imitation, it is of a slight and unconscious kind. The second criticism deserves fuller notice, because it is constantly repeated to this day. The following letters show how strongly Miss Barrett protested against it. As she told Horne,[1] with reference to this very subject: 'If I fail ultimately before the public — that is, before the people — for an ephemeral popularity does not appear to me to be worth trying for — it will not be because I have shrunk from the amount of labour, where labour could do anything. I have *worked* at poetry; it has not been with me reverie, but art.' That her rhymes were inexact, especially in such poems as 'The Dead Pan,' she did not deny; but her defence was that the inexactness was due to a deliberate attempt to widen the artistic capabilities of the English language. Partly, perhaps, as a result of her acquaintance with Italian literature, she had a marked fondness for disyllabic rhymes; and since pure rhymes of this kind are not plentiful in English, she tried the experiment of using assonances instead. Hence such rhymes as *silence* and *islands*, *vision* and *procession*, *panther* and *saunter*, examples which could be indefinitely multiplied if need were. Now it may be that a writer with a very sensitive ear would not have attempted such an experiment, and it is a fact that public taste has not approved it; but the experiment itself is as legitimate as, say, the metrical experiments in hexameters and hendecasyllabics of Longfellow or Tennyson, and whether approved or not it should be criticised as an experiment, not as mere carelessness. That Mrs. Browning's ear was quite capable of discerning true rhymes is shown by the fact that she tacitly abandoned her experiment in assonances. Not only in the pure and high art of the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' but even in 'Casa Guidi

[1] *Letters to R. H. Horne*, ii. 119.

Windows,' the rhetorical and sometimes colloquial tone of which might have been thought to lend itself to such devices, imperfect rhymes occur but rarely, not exceeding the limits allowed to himself by every poet who has rhymed *given* and *heaven;* and the roll of those who have *not* done so must be small indeed.

The point has seemed worth dwelling on, because it touches a commonplace of criticism as regards Mrs. Browning; but we may now make way for her own comments on her critics and friends.

To H. S. Boyd

Tuesday, August 13, 1844 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — I must thank you for the great kindness with which you have responded to a natural expression of feeling on my part, and for all the pleasure of finding you pleased with the inscription of 'Cyprus Wine.' Your note has given me much true pleasure. Yes; if my verses survive me, I should wish them to relate the fact of my being your debtor for many happy hours.

And now I must explain to you that most of the 'incorrectnesses' you speak of may be 'incorrectnesses,' but are not *negligences*. I have a theory about double rhymes for which I shall be attacked by the critics, but which I could justify perhaps on high authority, or at least analogy. In fact, these volumes of mine have more double rhymes than any two books of English poems that ever to my knowledge were printed; I mean of English poems *not comic*. Now, of double rhymes in use, which are perfect rhymes, you are aware how few there are, and yet you are also aware of what an admirable effect in making a rhythm various and vigorous, double rhyming is in English poetry. Therefore I have used a certain licence; and after much thoughtful study of the Elizabethan writers, have ventured it with the public. And do *you* tell me, *you* who object to the use of

a different *vowel* in a double rhyme, *why* you rhyme (as everybody does, without blame from anybody) 'given' to 'heaven,' when you object to my rhyming 'remember' and 'chamber'? The analogy surely is all on my side, and I *believe* that the spirit of the English language is also.

I write all this because you will find many other sins of the sort, besides those in the 'Cyprus Wine'; and because I wish you to consider the subject as *a point for consideration* seriously, and not to blame me as a writer of careless verses. If I deal too much in licences, it is not because I am idle, but because I am speculative for freedom's sake. It is possible, you know, to be wrong conscientiously; and I stand up for my conscience only.

I thank you earnestly for your candour hitherto, and I beseech you to be candid to the end.

It is tawny as Rhea's lion.

I know (although you don't say so) you object to that line. Yet consider its structure. Does not the final 'y' of 'tawny' suppose an apostrophe and apocope? Do you not run 'tawny as' into two syllables naturally? I want you to see my principle.

With regard to blank verse, the great Fletcher admits sometimes seventeen syllables into his lines.

I hope Miss Heard received her copy, and that you will not think me arrogant in writing freely to you.

Believe me, I write only freely and not arrogantly; and I am impressed with the conviction that my work abounds with far more faults than you in your kindness will discover, notwithstanding your acumen.

Always your affectionate and grateful

ELIBET.

To H. S. Boyd

Wednesday, August 14, 1844 [postmark].

My dearest Mr. Boyd. — I must thank you for the great great pleasure with which I have this moment read your

note, the more welcome, as (without hypocrisy) I had worked myself up into a nervous apprehension, from your former one, that I should seem so 'rudis atque incomposita' to you, in consequence of certain licences, as to end by being intolerable. I know what an ear you have, and how you can hear the dust on the wheel as it goes on. Well, I wrote to you yesterday, to beg you to be patient and considerate.

But you are always given to surprise me with abundant kindness — with supererogatory kindness. I believe in *that*, certainly.

I am very very glad that you think me stronger and more perspicuous. For the perspicuity, I have struggled hard. . . .

Your affectionate and grateful

ELZBETH.

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street: August 22, 1844.

. . . Thank you for your welcome letter, so kind in its candour. *I* angry that you should prefer 'The Seraphim'! Angry? No *indeed, indeed*, I am grateful for 'The Seraphim,' and not exacting for the 'Drama,' and all the more because of a secret obstinate persuasion that the 'Drama' will have a majority of friends in the end, and perhaps deserve to have them. Nay, why should I throw perhapses over my own impressions, and be insincere to you who have honoured me by being sincere? Why should I dissemble my own belief that the 'Drama' is worth two or three 'Seraphims' — *my own* belief, you know, which is worth nothing, writers knowing themselves so superficially, and having such a natural leaning to their last work. Still, I may say honestly to you, that I have a far more modest value for 'The Seraphim' than your kindness suggests, and that I have seemed to myself to have a clear insight into the fact that that poem was only borne up by the minor poems published with it,

from immediate destruction. There is a want of unity in it which vexes me to think of, and the other faults magnify themselves day by day, more and more, in my eyes. Therefore it is not that I care *more* for the 'Drama,' but I care less for 'The Seraphim.' Both poems fall short of my aspiration and desire, but the 'Drama' seems to me fuller, freer and stronger, and worth the other three times over. If it has anything new, I think it must be something new into which I have lived, for certainly I wrote it sincerely and from an inner impulse. In fact, I never wrote any poem with so much sense of pleasure in the composition, and so rapidly, with continuous flow — from fifty to a hundred lines a day, and quite in a glow of pleasure and impulse all through. Still, you have not been used to see me in blank verse, and there may be something in that. That the poem is full of faults and imperfections I do not in the least doubt. I have vibrated between exultations and despondencies in the correcting and printing of it, though the composition went smoothly to an end, and I am prepared to receive the bastinado to the critical degree, I do assure you. The few opinions I have yet had are all to the effect that my advance on the former publication is very great and obvious, but then I am aware that people who thought exactly the contrary would be naturally backward in giving me their opinion. . . . Indeed, I thank you most earnestly. Truth and kindness, how rarely do they come together! I am very grateful to you. It is curious that 'Duchess May' is not a favorite of mine, and that I have sighed one or two secret wishes towards its extirpation, but other writers besides yourself have singled it out for praise in private letters to me. There has been no printed review yet, I believe; and when I think of them, I try to think of something else, for with no private friends among the critical body (not that I should desire to owe security in such a matter to private friendship) it is awful enough, this looking forward to be reviewed. Never mind, the ultimate pro-

sperity of the book lies far above the critics, and can neither be mended nor made nor unmade by *them*.

. . . . . .

To John Kenyon

Wednesday morning [August 1844].

I return Mr. Chorley's[1] note, my dear cousin, with thankful thoughts of him — as of you. I wish I could persuade you of the rightness of my view about 'Essays on Mind' and such things, and how the difference between them and my present poems is not merely the difference between two schools, as you seemed to intimate yesterday, nor even the difference between immaturity and maturity; but that it is the difference between the dead and the living, between a copy and an individuality, between what is myself and what is not myself. To you who have a personal interest and — may I say? — affection for me, the girl's exercise assumes a factitious value, but to the public the matter is otherwise and ought to be otherwise. And for the 'psychological' side of the question, *do* observe that I have not reputation enough to suggest a curiosity about *my legends*. Instead of your 'legendary lore,' it would be just a legendary bore. Now you understand what I mean. I do not underrate Pope nor his school, but I *do* disesteem everything which, bearing the shape of a book, is not the true expression of a mind, and I know and feel (and so do *you*) that a girl's exercise written when all the experience lay in books, and

[1] Henry Fothergill Chorley (1808–1872) was one of the principal members of the staff of the *Athenæum*, especially in literary and musical matters. Dr. Garnett (in the *Dictionary of National Biography*) says of him, shortly after his first joining the staff in 1833, that 'his articles largely contributed to maintain the reputation the *Athenæum* had already acquired for impartiality at a time when puffery was more rampant than ever before or since, and when the only other London literary journal of any pretension was notoriously venal.' He also wrote several novels and dramas, which met with but little popular success.

the mind was suited rather for intelligence than production, lying like an infant's face with an undeveloped expression, must be valueless in itself, and if offered to the public directly or indirectly as a work of mine, highly injurious to me. Why, of the 'Prometheus' volume, even, you know what I think and desire. 'The Seraphim,' with all its feebleness and shortcomings and obscurities, yet is the first utterance of my own individuality, and therefore the only volume except the last which is not a disadvantage to me to have thought of, and happily for me, the early books, never having been advertised, nor reviewed, except by accident, once or twice, are as safe from the public as manuscript.

Oh, I shudder to think of the lines which might have been 'nicked in,' and all through Mr. Chorley's good nature. As if I had not sins enough to ruin me in the new poems, without reviving juvenile ones, sinned when I knew no better. Perhaps you would like to have a series of epic poems which I wrote from nine years old to eleven. They might illustrate some doctrine of innate ideas, and enrich (to that end) the myths of metaphysicians.

And also agree with me in reverencing that wonderful genius *Keats*, who, rising as a grand exception from among the vulgar herd of juvenile versifiers, was an individual *man* from the beginning, and spoke with his own voice, though surrounded by the yet unfamiliar murmur of antique echoes.[1] Leigh Hunt calls him 'the young poet' very rightly. Most affectionately and gratefully yours,

E. B. B.

Do thank Mr. Chorley for me, will you?

[1] Compare Aurora Leigh's asseveration:

> 'By Keats' soul, the man who never stepped
> In gradual progress like another man,
> But, turning grandly on his central self,
> Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years
> And died, *not* young.'
>
> ('Aurora Leigh,' book i.; *Poetical Works*, vi. 38.)

To Mrs. Martin

Thursday, August 1844.

Thank you, my dearest Mrs. Martin, for your most kind letter, a reply to which should certainly, as you desired, have met you at Colwall; only, right or wrong, I have been flurried, agitated, put out of the way altogether, by Stormie's and Henry's plan of going to Egypt. Ah, now you are surprised. Now you think me excusable for being silent two days beyond my time — yes, and *they have gone*, it is no vague speculation. You know, or perhaps you don't know, that, a little time back, papa bought a ship, put a captain and crew of his own in it, and began to employ it in his favourite 'Via Lactea' of speculations. It has been once to Odessa with wool, I think; and now it has gone to Alexandria with coals. Stormie was wild to go to both places; and with regard to the last, papa has yielded. And Henry goes too. This was all arranged weeks ago, but nothing was said of it until last Monday to me; and when I heard it, I was a good deal moved of course, and although resigned now to their having their way in it, and their *pleasure*, which is better than their way, still I feel I have entered a new anxiety, and shall not be quite at ease again till they return. . . .

And now to thank you, my ever dearest Mrs. Martin, for your kind and welcome letter from the Lakes. I knew quite at the first page, and long before you said a word specifically, that dear Mr. Martin was better, and think that such a scene, even from under an umbrella, must have done good to the soul and body of both of you. I wish I could have looked through your eyes for once. But I suppose that neither through yours, nor through my own, am I ever likely to behold that sight. In the meantime it is with considerable satisfaction that I hear of your *failure of Wordsworth*, which was my salvation in a very awful sense. Why, if you had done such a thing, you would have put me to the

shame of too much honor. The speculation consoles me entirely for your loss in respect to Rydal Hall and its poet. By the way, I heard the other day that Rogers, who was intending to visit him, said, 'It is a bad time of year for it. The god is on his pedestal; and can only give gestures to his worshippers, and no conversation to his friends.' . . .

Although you did not find a letter from me on your return to Colwall, I do hope that you found *me* — viz. my book, which Mr. Burden took charge of, and promised to deliver or see delivered. When you have read it, *do* let me hear your own and Mr. Martin's true impression; and whether you think it worse or better than 'The Seraphim.' The only review which has yet appeared or had time to appear has been a very kind and cordial one in the 'Athenæum.' . . .

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mr Westwood

August 31, 1844.

My dear Mr. Westwood, — I send you the manuscript you ask for, and also my certificate that, although I certainly was once a little girl, yet I never in my life had fair hair, or received lessons when you mention. I think a cousin of mine, now dead, may have done it. The 'Barrett Barrett' seems to specify my family. I have a little cousin with bright fair hair at this moment who is an Elizabeth Barrett (the subject of my 'Portrait' [1]), but then she is a 'Georgiana' besides, and your friend must refer to times past. My hair is very dark indeed, and always was, as long as I remember, and also I have a friend who makes serious affidavit that I have never changed (except by being rather taller) since I was a year old. Altogether, you cannot make a case of identity out, and I am forced to give up the glory of being so long remembered for my cleverness.

[1] *Poetical Works*, iii. 172.

You do wrong in supposing me inclined to underrate Mr. Melville's power. He is inclined to High-Churchism, and to such doctrines as apostolical succession, and I, who am a Dissenter, and a believer in a universal Christianity, recoil from the exclusive doctrine.

But then, that is not depreciatory of his power and eloquence — surely not.

E. B.

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: Monday.
[About the end of August 1844.]

Dear Mr. Chorley, — Kindnesses are more frequent things with me than gladnesses, but I thank you earnestly for both in the letter I have this moment received.[1] You have given me a quick sudden pleasure which goes deeper (I am very sure) than self-love, for it must be something better than vanity that brings the tears so near the eyes. I thank you, dear Mr. Chorley.

After all, we are not quite strangers. I have had some early encouragement and direction from you, and much earlier (and later) literary pleasures from such of your writings as did not refer to me. I have studied 'Music and Manners'[2] under you, and found an excuse for my love of romance-reading from your grateful fancy. Then, as dear Miss Mitford's friend, you could not help being (however against your will!) a little my acquaintance; and this she daringly promised to make you in reality some day, till I took the fervour for prophecy.

Altogether I am justified, while I thank you as a stranger, to say one more word as a friend, and *that* shall be the best word — '*May God bless you!*' The trials with which He tries us all are different, but our faces may be turned

[1] A summary of its contents is given in the next letter but one.

[2] *Music and Manners in France and Germany: a Series of Travelling Sketches of Art and Society*, published by Mr. Chorley in 1841.

towards the end in cheerfulness, for '*to* the end He has loved us.' I remain,

Very faithfully, your obliged
ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

You may trust me with the secret of your kindness to me. It shall not go farther.

To H. S. Boyd

Monday, September 1, 1844.

My dearest Mr. Boyd, — I thank you for the Cyprus, and also for a still sweeter amreeta — your praise. Certainly to be praised as you praise me might well be supposed likely to turn a sager head than mine, but I feel that (with all my sensitive and grateful appreciation of such words) I am removed rather below than above the ordinary temptations of vanity. Poetry is to me rather a passion than an ambition, and the gadfly which drives me along that road pricks deeper than an expectation of fame could do.

Moreover, there will be plenty of counter-irritation to prevent me from growing feverish under your praises. And as a beginning, I hear that the 'John Bull' newspaper has cut me up with sanguinary gashes, for the edification of its Sabbath readers. I have not seen it yet, but I hear so. The 'Drama' is the particular victim. Do not send for the paper. I will let you have it, if you should wish for it.

One thing is left to me to say. Arabel told you of a letter I had received from a professional critic, and I am sorry that she should have told you so without binding you to secrecy on the point at the same time. In fact, the writer of the letter begged me *not* to speak of it, and I took an engagement to him *not* to speak of it. Now it would be very unpleasant to me, and dishonorable to me, if, after entering into this engagement, the circumstance of the letter should come to be talked about. Of course you

will understand that I do not object to your having been informed of the thing, only Arabel should have remembered to ask you not to mention again the name of the critic who wrote to me.

May God bless you, my very dear friend. I drink thoughts of you in Cyprus every day.

Your ever affectionate

ELIBET.

There is no review in the 'Examiner' yet, nor any continuation in the 'Athenæum.' [1]

To Mrs. Martin

September 10, 1844.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I will not lose a post in assuring you that I was not silent because of any disappointment from your previous letter. I could only feel the *kindness* of that letter, and this was certainly the chief and uppermost feeling at the time of reading it, and since. Your preference of 'The Seraphim' one other person besides yourself has acknowledged to me in the same manner, and although I myself — perhaps from the natural leaning to last works, and perhaps from a wise recognition of the complete failure of the poem called 'The Seraphim' — do disagree with you, yet I can easily forgive you for such a thought, and believe that you see sufficient grounds for entertaining it. More and more I congratulate myself (at any rate) for the decision I came to at the last moment, and in the face of some persuasions, to call the book 'Poems,' instead of trusting its responsibility to the 'Drama,' by such a title as 'A Drama of Exile, and Poems.' It is plain, as I anticipated, that for one person who is ever so little pleased

[1] The *Athenæum* had reserved the two longer poems, the 'Drama of Exile' and the 'Vision of Poets,' for possible notice in a second article, which, however, never appeared.

with the 'Drama,' fifty at least will like the smaller poems. And perhaps they are right. The longer sustaining of a subject requires, of course, more power, and I may have failed in it altogether.

Yes, I think I may say that I am satisfied so far with the aspect of things in relation to the book. You see there has scarcely been time yet to give any except a sanguine or despondent judgment — I mean, there is scarcely room yet for forming a very rational inference of what will ultimately be, without the presentiments of hope or fear. The book came out too late in August for any chance of a mention in the September magazines, and at the dead time of year, when the very critics were thinking more of holiday innocence than of their carnivorous instincts. This will not hurt it ultimately, although it might have hurt a *novel*. The regular critics will come back to it; and in the meantime the newspapers critics are noticing it all round, with more or less admissions to its advantage. The 'Atlas' is the best of the newspapers for literary notices; and it spoke graciously on the whole; though I do protest against being violently attached to a 'school.' I have faults enough, I know; but it is just to say that they are at least my own. Well, then! It is true that the 'Westminster Review' says briefly what is great praise, and promises to take the earliest opportunity of reviewing me 'at large.' So that with regard to the critics, there seems to be a good prospect. Then I have had some very pleasant private letters — one from Carlyle; an oath from Miss Martineau to give her whole mind to the work and tell me her free and full opinion, which I have not received yet; an assurance from an acquaintance of Mrs. Jameson that she was much pleased. But the letter which pleased me most was addressed to me by a professional critic, personally unknown to me, who wrote to say that he had traced me up, step by step, ever since I began to print, and that my last volumes were so much better than any preceding them, and were such *living books*,

that they restored to him the impulses of his youth and constrained him to thank me for the pleasant emotions they had excited. I cannot say the name of the writer of this letter, because he asked me not to do so, but of course it was very pleasant to read. Now you will not call me vain for speaking of this. I would not speak of it; only I want (you see) to prove to you how faithfully and gratefully I have a trust in your kindness and sympathy. It is certainly the best kindness to speak the truth to me. I have written those poems as well as I could, and I hope to write others better. I have not reached my own ideal; and I cannot expect to have satisfied other people's expectation. But it is (as I sometimes say) the least ignoble part of me, that I love poetry better than I love my own successes in it.

I am glad that you like 'The Lost Bower.' The scene of that poem is the wood above the garden at Hope End.

It is very true, my dearest Mrs. Martin, all that you say about the voyage to Alexandria. And I do not feel the anxiety I *thought I should*. In fact, *I am surprised to feel so little anxiety*. Still, when they are at home again, I shall be happier than I am now, *that* I feel strongly besides.

What I missed most in your first letter was what I do not miss in the second, the good news of dear Mr. Martin. Both he and you are very vainglorious, I suppose, about O'Connell; but although I was delighted on every account at his late victory,[1] or rather at the late victory of justice and constitutional law, he never was a hero of mine and is not likely to become one. If he had been (by the way) a hero of mine, I should have been quite ashamed of him for being so unequal to his grand position as was demonstrated by the speech from the balcony. Such poetry in the position, and such prose in the speech! He has not the stuff in him of which heroes are made. There is a thread of cotton everywhere crossing the silk. . . .

[1] The reversal by the House of Lords of his conviction in Ireland for conspiracy, which the English Court of Queen's Bench had confirmed.

With our united love to both of you,
Ever, dearest Mrs. Martin, most affectionately yours,
BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Wednesday [about September 1844].

My dearest Mrs. Martin,— . . . Did I tell you that Miss Martineau had promised and vowed to me to tell me the whole truth with respect to the poems? Her letter did not come until a few days ago, and for a full month after the publication; and I was so fearful of the probable sentence that my hands shook as they broke the seal. But such a pleasant letter! I have been overjoyed with it. She says that her 'predominant impression is of the *originality*'—very pleasant to hear. I must not forget, however, to say that she complains of 'want of variety' in the general effect of the drama, and that she 'likes Lucifer less than anything in the two volumes.' You see how you have high backers. Still she talks of 'immense advances,' which consoles me again. In fact, there is scarcely a word to *require* consolation in her letter, and what did not please me least—nay, to do myself justice, what put all the rest out of my head for some minutes with joy—is the account she gives of herself. For she is better and likely still to be better; she has recovered appetite and sleep, and lost the most threatening symptoms of disease; she has been out for the first time for four years and a half, lying on the grass flat, she says, with my books open beside her day after day. (That *does* sound vain of me, but I cannot resist the temptation of writing it!) And the means—the means! Such means you would never divine! It is *mesmerism*. She is thrown into the magnetic trance twice a day; and the progress is manifest; and the hope for the future clear. Now, what do you both think? Consider what a case it is! No case of a weak-minded woman and a nervous affection; but of the most manlike woman in the three

kingdoms — in the best sense of man — a woman gifted with admirable fortitude, as well as exercised in high logic, a woman of sensibility and of imagination certainly, but apt to carry her reason unbent wherever she sets her foot; given to utilitarian philosophy and the habit of logical analysis; and suffering under a disease which has induced change of structure and yielded to no tried remedy! Is it not wonderful, and past expectation? She suggests that I should try the means — but I understand that in cases like mine the remedy has done harm instead of good, by over-exciting the system. But her experience will settle the question of the reality of magnetism with a whole generation of infidels. For my own part, I have long been a believer, *in spite of papa*. Then I have had very kind letters from Mrs. Jameson, the 'Ennuyée,'[1] and from Mr. Serjeant Talfourd and some less famous persons. And a poet with a Welsh name wrote to me yesterday to say that he was writing a poem 'similar to my "Drama of Exile,"' and begged me to subscribe to it. Now I tell you all this to make you smile, and because some of it will interest you more gravely. It will prove to dear unjust Mr. Martin that I do not distrust your sympathy. How could he think so of me? I am half vexed that he should think so. Indeed — indeed I am not so morbidly vain. Why, if you had told me that the books were without any sort of value in your eyes, do you imagine that I should not have valued you, reverenced you ever after for your truth, so sacred a thing in friendship? I really believe it would have been my predominant feeling. But you proved your truth without trying me so hardly; I had *both* truth and praise from you, and surely quite enough, and *more* than enough, as many would think, of the latter.

My dearest papa left us this morning to go for a few days into Cornwall for the purpose of examining a quarry

[1] Mrs. Jameson's earliest book, and one which achieved considerable popularity, was her *Diary of an Ennuyée.*

in which he has bought or is about to buy shares, and he means to strike on for the Land's End and to see Falmouth before he returns. It depresses me to think of his being away; his presence or the sense of his nearness having so much cheering and soothing influence with me; but it will be an excellent change for him, even if he does not, as he expects, dig an immense fortune out of the quarries. . . .

Your affectionate and ever obliged

BA.

To Cornelius Mathews

London, 50 Wimpole Street: October 1, 1844.

My dear Mr. Mathews, — I have just received your note, which, on the principle of single sighs or breaths being wafted from Indies to the poles, arrived quite safely, and I was very glad to have it. I shall fall into monotony if I go on to talk of my continued warm sense of your wonderful kindness to me, a stranger according to the manner of men; and, indeed, I have just this moment been writing a note to a friend two streets away, and calling it 'wonderful kindness.' I cannot, however, of course, allow you to run the tether of your impulse and furnish me with the reviews of my books and other things you speak of at your own expense, and I should prefer, if you would have the goodness to give the necessary direction to Messrs. Putnam & Co., that they should send what would interest me to see, together with a note of the pecuniary debt to themselves. I shall like to see the reviews, of course; and that you should have taken the first word of American judgment into your own mouth is a pleasant thought to me, and leaves me grateful. In England I have no reason so far to be otherwise than well pleased. There has not, indeed, been much yet besides newspaper criticisms — except 'Ainsworth's Magazine,' which is benignant! — there has not been time. The monthly reviews give themselves 'pause' in such matters to set the plumes of their dignity, and I am rather glad than otherwise not to

have the first fruits of their haste. The 'Atlas,' the best newspaper for literary reviews, excepting always the 'Examiner,' who does not speak yet, is generous to me, and I have reason to be satisfied with others. And our most influential quarterly (after the 'Edinburgh' and right 'Quarterly'), the 'Westminster Review,' promises an early paper with passing words of high praise. What vexed me a little in one or two of the journals was an attempt made to fix me in a school, and the calling me a follower of Tennyson for my habit of using compound words, noun-substantives, which I used to do before I knew a page of Tennyson, and adopted from a study of our old English writers, and Greeks and even Germans. The custom is so far from being peculiar to Tennyson, that Shelley and Keats and Leigh Hunt are all redolent of it, and no one can read our old poets without perceiving the leaning of our Saxon to that species of coalition. Then I have had letters of great kindness from 'Spirits of the Age,' whose praises are so many crowns, and altogether am far from being out of spirits about the prospect of my work. I am glad, however, that I gave the name of 'Poems' to the work instead of admitting the 'Drama of Exile' into the title-page and increasing its responsibility; for one person who likes the 'Drama,' ten like the other poems. Both Carlyle and Miss Martineau select as favorite 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship,' which amuses and surprises me somewhat. In that poem I had endeavoured to throw conventionalities (turned asbestos for the nonce) into the fire of poetry, to make them glow and glitter as if they were not dull things. Well, I shall soon hear what *you* like best - and worst. I wonder if you have been very carnivorous with me! I tremble a little to think of your hereditary claim to an instrument called the tomahawk. Still, I am sure I shall have to think *most*, ever as now, of your kindness; and *truth* must be sacred to all of us, whether we have to suffer or be glad by it. As for Mr. Horne, I cannot answer for what he has received or not

received. I had one note from him on silver paper (fear of postage having reduced him to a transparency) from Germany, and that is all, and I did not think him in good spirits in what he said of himself. I will tell him what you have the goodness to say, and something, too, on my own part. He has had a hard time of it with his 'Spirit of the Age;' the attacks on the book here being bitter in the extreme. Your 'Democratic' does not comfort him for the rest, by the way, and, indeed, he is almost past comfort on the subject. I had a letter the other day from Dr. Shelton Mackenzie, whom I do not know personally, but who is about to publish a 'Living Author Dictionary,' and who, by some association, talked of the effeminacy of 'the American poets,' so I begged him to read your poems on 'Man' and prepare an exception to his position. I wish to write more and must not.

Most faithfully yours,

E. B. B.

Am I the first with the great and good news for America and England that Harriet Martineau is better and likely to be better? She told me so herself, and attributes the change to the agency of *mesmerism*.

To H. S. Boyd

October 4, 1844.

My dearest Mr. Boyd,—. . . As to 'The Lost Bower,' I am penitent about having caused you so much disturbance. I sometimes fancy that a little varying of the accents, though at the obvious expense of injuring the smoothness of every line considered separately, gives variety of cadence and fuller harmony to the general effect. But I do not question that I deserve a great deal of blame on this point as on others. Many lines in 'Isobel's Child' are very slovenly and weak from a multitude of causes. I hope you will like 'The Lost Bower'

better when you try it again than you did at first, though I do not, of course, expect that you will not see much to cry out against. The subject of the poem was an actual fact of my childhood.

Oh, and I think I told you, when giving you the history of 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship,' that I wrote the *thirteen* last pages of it in one day. I ought to have said *nineteen* pages instead. But don't tell anybody; only keep the circumstance in your mind when you need it and see the faults. Nobody knows of it except you and Mr. Kenyon and my own family for the reason I told you. I sent off that poem to the press piece-meal, as I never in my life did before with any poem. And since I wrote to you I have heard of Mr. Eagles, one of the first writers in 'Blackwood' and a man of very refined taste, adding another name to the many of those who have preferred it to anything in the two volumes. He says that he has read it at least six times aloud to various persons, and calls it a 'beautiful *sui generis* drama.' On which Mr. Kenyon observes that I am 'ruined for life, and shall be sure never to take pains with any poem again.'

The American edition (did Arabel tell you?) was to be out in New York a week ago, and was to consist of fifteen hundred copies in two volumes, as in England.

She sends you the verses and asks you to make allowances for the delay in doing so. I cannot help believing that if you were better read in Wordsworth you would appreciate him better. Ever since I knew what poetry is, I have believed in him as a great poet, and I do not understand how reasonably there can be a doubt of it. Will you remember that nearly all the first minds of the age have admitted his power (without going to intrinsic evidence), and then say that he *can* be a mere Grub Street writer? It is not that he is only or chiefly admired by the *profanum vulgus*, that he is a mere popular and fashionable poet, but that men of genius in this and other countries unite in confessing his

genius. And is not this a significant circumstance — significant, at least ? . . .

Believe me, yourself, your affectionate and grateful

ELIBET B. B.

How kind you are, far too kind, about the Cyprus wine ; I thank you very much.

To Mrs. Martin

October 5, 1844.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — . . . Well, papa came back from Cornwall just as I came back to my own room, and he was as pleased with his quarry as I was to have the sight again of his face. During his absence, Henrietta had a little polka (which did not bring the house down on its knees), and I had a transparent blind put up in my open window. There is a castle in the blind, and a castle gateway, and two walks, and several peasants, and groves of trees which rise in excellent harmony with the fall of my green damask curtains — new, since you saw me last. Papa insults me with the analogy of a back window in a confectioner's shop, but is obviously moved when the sunshine lights up the castle, notwithstanding. And Mr. Kenyon and everybody in the house grow ecstatic rather than otherwise, as they stand in contemplation before it, and tell me (what is obvious without their evidence) that the effect is beautiful, and that the whole room catches a light from it. Well, and then Mr. Kenyon has given me a new table, with a rail round it to consecrate it from Flush's paws, and large enough to hold all my varieties of vanities.

I had another letter from Miss Martineau the other day, and she says she has a 'hat of her own, a parasol of her own,' and that she can 'walk a mile with ease.' *What do miracles mean?* Miracle or not, however, one thing is certain — it is very joyful ; and her own sensations on being removed suddenly from the verge of the prospect of a most

painful death — a most painful and lingering death — must be strange and overwhelming.

I hope I may hear soon from you that you had much pleasure at Clifton, and some benefit in the air and change, and that dear Mr. Martin and yourself are both as well as possible. Do you take in 'Punch'? If not, you *ought.* Mr. Kenyon and I agreed the other day that we should be more willing 'to take our politics' from 'Punch' than from any other of the newspaper oracles. 'Punch' is very generous, and I like him for everything, except for his rough treatment of Louis Philippe, whom I believe to be a great man — for a king. And then, it is well worth fourpence to laugh once a week. I do recommend 'Punch' to you.[1] Douglas Jerrold is the editor, I fancy, and he has a troop of 'wits,' such as Planché, Titmarsh, and the author of 'Little Peddlington,' to support him. . . .

Now I have written enough to tire you, I am sure. May God bless you both! Did you read 'Coningsby,' that very able book, without character, story, or specific teaching? It is well worth reading, and worth wondering over. D'Israeli, who is a man of genius, has written, nevertheless, books which will live longer, and move deeper. But everybody should read 'Coningsby.' It is a sign of the times. Believe me, my dearest Mrs. Martin,

Your very affectionate

BA.

To John Kenyon

Tuesday, October 8, 1844.

Thank you, my dearest cousin, for your kind little note, which I run the chance of answering by that Wednesday's post you think you may wait for. So (*vis à* your table) I set about writing to you, and the first word, of course, must be

[1] It will be remembered that 'Punch' had only been in existence for three years at this time, which will account for this apparently superfluous advice.

an expression of my contentment with the 'Examiner' review. Indeed, I am more than contented — delighted with it. I had some dread, vaguely fashioned, about the 'Examiner,' the very delay looked ominous. And then, I thought to myself, though I did not say, that if Mr. Forster praised the verses on Flush to you, it was just because he had no sympathy for anything else. But it is all the contrary, you see, and I am the more pleased for the want of previous expectation; and I must add that if *you* were so kind as to be glad of being associated with me by Mr. Forster's reference, *I* was so *human* as to be very very glad of being associated with *you* by the same. Also you shall criticise 'Geraldine' exactly as you like — mind, I don't think it all so rough as the extracts appear to be, and some variety is attained by that playing at ball with the *home*, which causes the apparent roughness — still you shall criticise 'Geraldine' exactly as you like. I have a great fancy for writing some day a longer poem of a like class — a poem comprehending the aspect and manners of modern life, and flinching at nothing of the conventional. I think it might be done with good effect. You said once that Tennyson had done it in 'Locksley Hall,' and I half agreed with you. But looking at 'Locksley Hall' again, I find that not much has been done in that way, noble and passionate and *full* as the poem is in other ways. But there is no story, no *manners*, no modern allusion, except in the grand general allusion to the 'Mother age,' and no approach to the treatment of a conventionality. But Crabbe, as you say, has done it, and Campbell in his 'Theodric' in a few touches was near to do it; but Moore clearly apprehends the species of poem in his 'Triumphs of Temper' and 'Triumphs of Music,' and so did Miss Seward, who called it the 'poetical novel.' Now I do think that a true poetical novel — modern, and on the level of the manners of the day — might be as good a poem as any other, and much more popular besides. Do you not think so?

I had a letter from dear Miss Mitford this morning, with yours, but I can find nothing in it that you will care to hear again. She complains of the vagueness of 'Coningsby,' and praises the French writers — a sympathy between us, that last, which we wear hidden in our sleeves for the sake of propriety. Not a word of coming to London, though I asked. Neither have I heard again from Miss Martineau. . . .

Ever most affectionately and gratefully yours,

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

October 15, 1844.

. . . Not a word more have I heard from Miss Martineau; and shall not soon, perhaps, as she is commanded not to write, not to read — to do nothing, in fact, except the getting better. I am not, I confess, quite satisfied myself. But she herself appears to be so altogether, and she speaks of '*symptoms* having given way,' implying a structural change. Yes, I use the common phrase in respect to mesmerism, and think 'there is something in it.' Only I think, besides, that, if something, there must be a great deal in it. Clairvoyance has precisely the same evidence as the phenomenon of the trance has, and scientific and philosophical minds are recognising all the phenomena *as facts* on all sides of us. Mr. Kenyon's is the best distinction, and the immense quantity of *humbug* which embroiders the truth over and over, and round and round, makes it needful: 'I believe in mesmerism, but not in *mesmerists*.'

We have had no other letter from our Egyptians, but can wait a little longer without losing our patience.

The blind rises in favour, and the ivy would not fall, if it would but live. Alas! I am going to try *guano* as a last resource. You see, in painting the windows, papa was forced to have it taken down, and the ivy that grows on ruins and oaks is not usually taken down 'for the nonce.'

I think I shall have a myrtle grove in two or three large pots inside the window. I have a mind to try it.

I heard twice from dear Mr. Kenyon at Dover, where he was detained by the weather, but not since his entrance into France. Which is grand enough word for the French Majesty itself — 'entrance into France.' By the way, I do hope you have some sympathy with me in my respect for the King of the French — that right kingly king, Louis Philippe. If France had *borne* more liberty, he would not have withheld it, and, for the rest, and in all truly royal qualities, he is the noblest king, according to my idea, in Europe — the most royal king in the encouragement of art and literature, and in the honoring of artists and men of letters. Let a young unknown writer accomplish a successful tragedy, and the next day he sits at the king's table — not in a metaphor, but face to face. See how different the matter is in our court, where the artists are shown up the back stairs, and where no poet (even by the back stairs) can penetrate, unless so fortunate as to be a banker also. What is the use of kings and queens in these days, except to encourage arts and letters? Really I cannot see. Anybody can hunt an otter out of a box — who has nerve enough.

I had a letter from America to-day, and heard that my book was not published there until the fifth of this October. Still, a few copies had preceded the publication, and made way among the critics, and several reviews were in the course of germinating very greenly. Yes, I was delighted with the 'Examiner,' and all the more so from having interpreted the long delay of the notice, the gloomiest manner possible. My friends try to persuade me that the book is making some impression, and I am willing enough to be convinced. Thank you for all your kind sympathy, my dear friend.

Now, do write to me soon again! Have you read Dr. Arnold's Life? I have not, but am very anxious to do so, from the admirable extracts in the 'Examiner' of last

Saturday, and also from what I hear of it in other quarters. That Dr. Arnold must have been *a man*, in the largest and noblest sense. May God bless you, both of you! I think of you, dearest Mrs. Martin, much, and remain

Your very affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

Saturday, October 29, 1844.

The moral of your letter, my dearest cousin, certainly is that no green herb of a secret will spring up and flourish between you and me.

The loss of Flush was a secret. My aunt's intention of coming to England (for I know not how to explain what she said to you, but by the supposition of an unfulfilled intention!) was a secret. And Mr. Chorley's letter to me was a third secret. All turned into light!

For the last, you may well praise me for discretion. The letter he wrote was pleasanter to me than many of the kindnesses (apart from your own) occasioned by my book — and when you asked me once 'what letters I had received,' if ever a woman deserved to be canonised for her silence, *I* did! But the effort was necessary — for he particularly desired that I would not mention to 'our common friends' the circumstance of his having written to me; and 'common friends' could only stand for 'Mr. Kenyon and Miss Mitford.' Of course what you tell me, of his liking the poems better still, is delightful to hear; but he reviewed them in the 'Athenæum' surely! The review we read in the 'Athenæum' was by his hand — could not be mistaken. . . .

Well; but Flushie! It is too true that he has been lost — lost and won; and true besides that I was a good deal upset by it *meo more;* and that I found it hard to eat and sleep as usual while he was in the hands of his enemies.

It is a secret too. We would not tell papa of it. Papa would have been angry with the unfortunate person who took Flush out without a chain; and would have kicked against the pricks of the necessary bribing of the thief in order to the getting him back. Therefore we didn't tell papa; and as I had a very bad convenient headache the day my eyes were reddest, I did not see him (except once) till Flush was on the sofa again. As to the thieves, you are very kind to talk daggers at them; and I feel no inclination to say 'Don't.' It is quite too bad and cruel. And think of their exceeding insolence in taking Flush away from this very door, while Arabel was waiting to have the door opened on her return from her walk: and in observing (as they gave him back for six guineas and a half) that they intended to have him again at the earliest opportunity and that *then* they must have *ten* guineas! I tell poor Flushie (while he looks very earnestly in my face) that he and I shall be ruined at last, and that I shall have no money to buy him cakes; but the worst is the anxiety! Whether I am particularly silly, or not, I don't know; they say here, that I am; but it seems to me impossible for anybody who really cares for a dog, to think quietly of his being in the hands of those infamous men. And then I know how poor Flushie must feel it. When he was brought home, he began to cry in his manner, whine, as if his heart was full! It was just what I was inclined to do myself — 'and thus was Flushie lost and won.'

But we are both recovered now, thank you; and intend to be very prudent for the future. I am delighted to think of your being in England; it is the next best thing to your being in London. In regard to Miss Martineau, I agree with you word for word; but I cannot overcome an additional *horror*, which you do not express, or feel probably.

There is an excellent refutation of Puseyism in the 'Edinburgh Review' — by whom? and I have been reading

besides the admirable paper by Macaulay in the same number. And now I must be done; having resolved to let you hear without a post's delay. Otherwise I might have American news for you, as I hear that a packet has come in.

My brothers arrived in great spirits at Malta, after a *three weeks' voyage* from Gibraltar; and must now be in Egypt, I think and trust.

May God bless you, my dear cousin.

Most affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To John Kenyon

50 Wimpole Street: November 5, 1844.

Well, but am I really so bad? *'Et tu!'* Can *you* call me careless? Remember all the altering of manuscript and proof — and remember how the obscurities used to fly away before your cloud-compelling, when you were the Jove of the criticisms! That the books (I won't call them *our* books when I am speaking of the faults) are remarkable for defects and superfluities of evil, I can see quite as well as another; but then I won't admit that 'it comes' of my carelessness, and refusing to take pains. On the contrary, my belief is, that very few writers called 'correct' who have selected classical models to work from, pay more laborious attention than I do habitually to the forms of thought and expression. 'Lady Geraldine' was an exception in her whole history. If I write fast sometimes (and the historical fact is that what has been written fastest, has pleased most), I am not apt to print without consideration. I appeal to Philip sober, if I am! My dearest cousin, do remember! As to the faults, I do not think of defending them, be very sure. My consolation is, that I may try to do better in time, if I may talk of time. The worst fault of all, as far as expression goes (the adjective-substantives, whether in prose or verse I cannot make up my mind

to consider faulty), is that kind of obscurity which is the same thing with inadequate expression. Be very sure — try to be very sure — that I am not obstinate and self-opiniated beyond measure. To *you* in any case, who have done so much for me, and who think of me so more than kindly, I feel it to be both duty and pleasure to defer and yield. Still, you know, we could not, if we were ten years about it, alter down the poems to the terms of all these reviewers. You would not desire it, if it were possible. I do not remember that you suggested any change in the verse on Æschylus. The critic[1] mistakes my allusion, which was to the fact that in the acting of the Eumenides, when the great tragic poet did actually 'frown as the gods did,' women fell down fainting from the benches. I did not refer to the effect of his human countenance 'during composition.' But I am very grateful to the reviewer whoever he may be — very — and with need. See how the 'Sun' shines in response to 'Blackwood' (thank you for sending me that notice), when previously we had had but a wintry rag from the same quarter! No; if I am not spoilt by *your kindness*, I am not likely to be so by any of these exoteric praises, however beyond what I expected or deserved. And then I am like a bird with one wing broken. Throw it out of the window; and after the first feeling of pleasure in liberty, it falls heavily. I have had moments of great pleasure in hearing whatever good has been thought of the poems; but the feeling of *elation* is too strong or rather too *long* for me. . . .

Can it be true that Mr. Newman has at last joined the Church of Rome?[2] If it is true, it will do much to prove to the most illogical minds the real character of the late movement. It will prove what the *point of sight* is, as by the drawing of a straight line. Miss Mitford told me that

[1] In *Blackwood*.

[2] Newman did not actually enter the Church of Rome until nearly a year later, in October 1845.

he had lately sent a message to a R. Catholic convent from the English Church, to the effect — 'you have done a good deed, but not at a right time.' It can but be a question of time, indeed, to the whole party; at least to such as are logical — and honest. . . . [*Unsigned*]

To John Kenyon

50 Wimpole Street: November 8, 1844.

Thank you, my dear dear cousin, for the kind thought of sending me Mr. Eagles's letter, and most for your own note. You know we *both* saw that he couldn't have written the paper in question; we *both* were poets and prophets by that sign, but I hope he understands that I shall gratefully remember what his intention was. As to his 'friend' who told him that I had 'imitated Tennyson,' why I can only say and feel that it is very particularly provoking to hear such things said, and that I wish people would find fault with my 'metre' in the place of them. In the matter of 'Geraldine' I shall not be puffed up. I shall take to mind what you suggest. Of course, if you find it hard to read, it must be my fault. And then the fact of there being a *story* to a poem will give a factitious merit in the eyes of many critics, which could not be an occasion of vainglory to the consciousness of the most vainglorious of writers. You made me smile by your suggestion about the aptitude of critics aforesaid for courting Lady Geraldines. Certes — however it may be — the poem has had more attention than its due. Oh, and I must tell you that I had a letter the other day from Mr. Westwood (one of my correspondents unknown) referring to 'Blackwood,' and observing on the mistake about Goethe. 'Did you not mean "fell" the verb,' he said, 'or do *I* mistake?' So, you see, some people in the world did actually understand what I meant. I am eager to prove that possibility sometimes.

How full of life of mind Mr. Eagles's letter is. Such letters always bring me to think of Harriet Martineau's pestilent plan of doing to destruction half of the intellectual life of the world, by suppressing every mental breath breathed through the post office. She was not in a state of clairvoyance when she said such a thing. I have not heard from her, but you observed what the 'Critic' said of William Howitt's being empowered by her to declare the circumstances of her recovery?

Again and again have I sent for Dr. Arnold's 'Life,' and I do hope to have it to-day. I am certain, by the extracts, besides your opinion, that I shall be delighted with it.

Why shouldn't Miss Martineau's apocalyptic housemaid[1] tell us whether Flush has a soul, and what is its 'future destination'? As to the fact of his soul, I have long had a strong opinion on it. The 'grand peut-être,' to which 'without revelation' the human argument is reduced, covers dog-nature with the sweep of its fringes.

Did you ever read Bulwer's 'Eva, or the Unhappy Marriage'? *That* is a sort of poetical novel, with modern manners inclusive. But Bulwer, although a poet in prose, writes all his rhythmetical compositions somewhat prosaically, providing an instance of that curious difference which exists between the poetical writer and the poet. It is easier to give the instance than the reason, but I suppose the cause of the rhythmetical impotence must lie somewhere in the want of the power of concentration. For is it not true that the most prolix poet is capable of briefer expression than the least prolix prose writer, or am I wrong? . . .

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

[1] Miss Martineau, besides having been cured by mesmerism herself, was blest with a housemaid who had visions under the same influence, concerning which Miss Martineau subsequently wrote at great length in the *Athenæum*.

To Cornelius Mathews

50 Wimpole Street: November 14, 1844.

My dear Mr. Mathews, — I write to tell you — only that there is nothing to tell — only in guard of my gratitude, lest you should come to think all manner of evil of me and of my supposed propensity to let everything pass like Mr. Horne's copies of the American edition of his work, *sub silentio*. Therefore I must write, and you are to please to understand that I have not up to this moment received either letter or book by the packet of October 10 which was charged, according to your intimation, with so much. I, being quite out of patience and out of breath with expectation, have repeatedly sent to Mr. Putnam, and he replies with undisturbed politeness that the ship has come in, and that his part and lot in her, together with mine, remain at the disposal of the Custom-house officers, and may remain some time longer. So you see how it is. I am waiting — simply *waiting*, and it is better to let you know that I am not forgetting instead.

In the meantime, your kindness will be glad to learn of the prosperity of my poems in my own country. I am more than satisfied in my most sanguine hope for them, and a little surprised besides. The critics have been good to me. 'Blackwood' and 'Tait' have this month both been generous, and the 'New Monthly' and 'Ainsworth's Magazine' did what they could. Then I have the 'Examiner' in my favor, and such heads and hearts as are better and purer than the purely critical, and I am very glad altogether, and very grateful, and hope to live long enough to acknowledge, if not to justify, much unexpected kindness. Of course, some hard criticism is mixed with the liberal sympathy, as you will see in 'Blackwood,' but some of it I deserve, even in my own eyes; and all of it I am willing to be patient under. The strange thing is, that without a single personal

friend among these critics, they should have expended on me so much 'gentillesse,' and this strangeness I feel very sensitively. Mr. Horne has not returned to England yet, and in a letter which I received from him some fortnight ago he desired to have my book sent to him to Germany, just as if he never meant to return to England again. I answered his sayings, and reiterated, in a way that would make you smile, my information about your having sent the American copies to him. I made my *ayez* very plain and articulate. He won't say again that he never heard of it — be sure of *that*. Well, and then Mr. Browning is not in England either, so that whatever you send for *him* must await his return from the east or the west or the south, wherever he is. The new spirit of the age is a wandering spirit. Mr. Dickens is in Italy. Even Miss Mitford *talks* of going to France, which is an extreme case for *her*. Do you never feel inclined to flash across the Atlantic to us, or can you really remain still in one place?

I must not forget to assure you, dear Mr. Mathews, as I may conscientiously do, even before I have looked into or received the 'Democratic Review,' that whatever fault you may find with me, my strongest feeling on reading your article will or must be *the sense of your kindness*. Of course I do not expect, nor should I wish, that your personal interest in me (proved in so many ways) would destroy your critical faculty in regard to me. Such an expectation, if I had entertained it, would have been scarcely honorable to either of us, and I may assure you that I never did entertain it. No; be at rest about the article. It is not likely that I shall think it 'inadequate.' And I may as well mention in connection with it that before you spoke of reviewing me I (in my despair of Mr. Horne's absence, and my impotency to assist your book) had thrown into my desk, to watch for some opportunity of publication, a review of your 'Poems on Man,' from my own hand, and that I am still waiting and considering and taking courage before I send it to

some current periodical. There is a difficulty — there is a feeling of shyness on my part, because, as I told you, I have no personal friend or introduction among the pressmen or the critics, and because the 'Athenæum,' which I should otherwise turn to first, has already treated of your work, and would not, of course, consent to reconsider an expressed opinion. Well, I shall do it somewhere. Forgive me the *appearance* of my impotency under a general aspect.

Ah, you cannot guess at the estate of poetry in the eyes of even such poetical English publishers as Mr. Moxon, who can write sonnets himself. Poetry is in their eyes just a desperate speculation. A poet must have tried his public before he tries the publisher — that is, before he expects the publisher to run a risk for him. But I will make any effort you like to suggest for any work of yours; I only tell you how *things are.* By the way, if I ever told you that Tennyson was ill, I may as rightly tell you now that he is well again, or was when I last heard of him. I do not know him personally. Also Harriet Martineau can walk five miles a day with ease, and believes in mesmerism with all her strength. Mr. Putnam had the goodness to write and open his reading room to me, who am in prison instead in mine.

May God bless you. Do let me hear from you soon, and believe me ever your friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

To Mrs. Martin

November 16, 1844.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, —. . . To-day I perceive in the 'contents' of the new 'Westminster Review' that my poems are reviewed in it, and I hope that you will both be interested enough in my fortunes to read at the library what may be said of them. Did George tell you that he imagined (as I also did) the 'Blackwood' paper to be by Mr. Phillimore the

barrister? Well, Mr. Phillimore denies it altogether, has in fact quarrelled with Christopher North, and writes no more for him, so that I am quite at a loss now where to carry my gratitude.

Do write to me soon. I hear that everybody should read Dr. Arnold's 'Life.' Do you know also 'Eōthen,' a work of genius? You have read, perhaps, Howitt's 'Visits to Remarkable Places' in the first series and second; and Mrs. Jameson's 'Visits and Sketches' and 'Life in Mexico.' Do you know the 'Santa Fé Expedition,' and Custine's 'Russia,' and 'Forest Life' by Mrs. Clavers? You will think that my associative process is in a most disorderly state, by all this running up and down the stairs of all sorts of subjects, in the naming of books. I would write a list, more as a list should be written, if I could see my way better, and this will do for a beginning in any case. You do not like romances, I believe, as I do, and then nearly every romance now-a-days, sets about pulling the joints of one's heart and soul out, as a process of course. 'Ellen Middleton' (which I have not read yet) is said to be very painful. Do you know Leigh Hunt's exquisite essays called 'The Indicator and Companion' &c., published by Moxon? I hold them at once in delight and reverence.

May God bless you both.

I am ever your affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

50 Wimpole Street:
Tuesday, November 26, 1844 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I thank you much for your little notes; and you know too well how my sympathy answers you, 'as face to face in a glass,' for me to assure you of it here. Your account of yourselves altogether I take to be satisfactory, because I never expected anybody

to gain strength very *rapidly* while in the actual endurance of hard medical discipline. I am glad you have found out a trustworthy adviser at Dover, but I feel nevertheless that you may *both trust* and *hope* in Dr. Bright, of whom I heard the very highest praises the other day. . . .

Now really I don't know why I should fancy you to be so deeply interested in Dr. Bright, that all this detail should be necessary. What I *do* want you to be interested in, is in Miss Martineau's mesmeric experience,[1] for a copy of which, in the last 'Athenæum,' I have sent ever since yesterday, in the intention of sending it to you. You will admit it to be curious as philosophy, and beautiful as composition; for the rest, I will not answer. Believing in mesmerism as an agency, I hesitate to assent to the necessary connection between Miss Martineau's cure and the power; and also I am of opinion that unbelievers will not very generally become converts through her representations. There is a tone of exaltation which will be observed upon, and one or two sentences are suggestive to scepticism. I will send it to you when I get the number. I understand that an intimate friend of hers (a lady) travelled down from the south of England to Tynemouth, simply to try to prevent the public exposition, but could not prevail. Mr. Milnes has, besides, been her visitor. He is fully a believer, she says, and affirms to having seen the same phenomena in the East, but regards the whole subject with *horror*. This still appears to be Mrs. Jameson's feeling, as you know it is mine. Mrs. Jameson came again to this door with a note, and overcoming by kindness, was let in on Saturday last; and sate with me for nearly an hour, and so ran into what my sisters call 'one of my sudden intimacies' that there was an embrace for a farewell. Of course she won my affections through my vanity (Mr. Martin will be sure to say, so I hasten to anticipate him) and by

[1] The *Athenæum* of November 23 contained the first of a series of articles by Miss Martineau, giving her experiences of mesmerism.

exaggerations about my poetry; but really, and although my heart beat itself almost to pieces for fear of seeing her as she walked upstairs, I do think I should have liked her *without the flattery*. She is very light — has the lightest of eyes, the lightest of complexions; no eyebrows, and what looked to me like very pale red hair, and thin lips of no colour at all. But with all this indecision of exterior the expression is rather acute than soft; and the conversation in its principal characteristics, analytical and examinative; throwing out no thought which is not as clear as glass — critical, in fact, in somewhat of an austere sense. I use 'austere,' of course, in its intellectual relation, for nothing in the world could be kinder, or more graciously kind, than her whole manner and words were to me. She is coming again in two or three days, she says. Yes, and she said of Miss Martineau's paper in the 'Athenæum,' that she very much doubted the wisdom of publishing it now; and that for the public's sake, if not for her own, Miss M. should have waited till the excitement of recovered health had a little subsided. She said of mesmerism altogether that she was inclined to believe it, but had not finally made up her convictions. She used words so exactly like some I have used myself that I must repeat them, 'that if there was *anything* in it, there was *so much*, it became scarcely possible to limit consequences, and the subject grew awful to contemplate.' . . .

On Saturday I had some copies of my American edition, which dazzle the English one; and one or two reviews, transatlantically transcendental in 'oilie flatterie.' And I heard yesterday from the English publisher Moxon, and he was 'happy to tell me that the work was selling very well,' and this without an inquiry on my part. To say the truth, I was *afraid* to inquire. It is good news altogether. The 'Westminster Review' won't be out till next month.

Wordsworth is so excited about the railroad that his wife persuaded him to go away to recover his serenity, but he

has returned raging worse than ever. He says that fifty members of Parliament have promised him their opposition. He is wrong, I think, but I also consider that if the people remembered his genius and his age, and suspended the obnoxious Act for a few years, they would be right. . . .

May God bless you both.

Most affectionately yours,

Ba.

To James Martin

December 10, 1844.

I have been thinking of you, my dear Mr. Martin, more and more the colder it has been, and had made up my mind to write to-day, let me feel as dull as I might. So, the vane only turns to *you* instead of to dearest Mrs. Martin in consequence of your letter — your letter makes *that* difference. I should have written to Dover in any case. . . .

You are to know that Miss Martineau's mesmeric experience is only peculiar as being Harriet Martineau's, otherwise it exhibits the mere commonplaces of the agency. You laugh, I see. I wish I could laugh too. I mean, I seriously wish that I could disbelieve in the reality of the power, which is in every way most repulsive to me. . . .

Mrs. Martin is surprised at me and others on account of our 'horror.' Surely it is a natural feeling, and she would herself be liable to it if she were *more credulous*. The agency seems to me like the shaking of the flood-gates placed by the Divine Creator between the unprepared soul and the unseen world. Then — the subjection of the will and vital powers of one individual to those of another, to the extent of the apparent solution of the very identity, is abhorrent from me. And then (as to the expediency of the matter, and to prove how far believers may be carried) there is even now a religious sect at Cheltenham, of persons who call themselves advocates of the 'third revelation,'

and profess to receive their system of theology entirely from patients in the sleep.

In the meantime, poor Miss Martineau, as the consequence of her desire to speak the truth as she apprehends it, is overwhelmed with atrocious insults from all quarters. For my own part I would rather fall into the hands of God than of man, and suffer as she did in the body, instead of being the mark of these cruel observations. But she has singular strength of mind, and calmly continues her testimony.

Miss Mitford writes to me: 'Be sure it is *all true*. I see it every day in my Jane' — her maid, who is mesmerised for deafness, but not, I believe, with much success curatively. As a remedy, the success has been far greater in the Martineau case than in others. With Miss Mitford's maid, the sleep is, however, produced; and the girl professed, at the third *séance*, to be able to *see behind her*.

I am glad I have so much interesting matter to look forward to in the 'Eldon Memoirs' as Pincher's biography. I am only in the first volume. Are English chancellors really made of such stuff? I couldn't have thought it. Pincher will help to reconcile me to the Law Lords perhaps.

And, to turn from Tory legislators, I am vainglorious in announcing to you that the Anti-Corn-Law League has taken up my poems on the top of its pikes as antithetic to 'War and Monopoly.' Have I not had a sonnet from Gutter Lane? And has not the journal called the 'League' reviewed me into the third heaven, high up — above the pure ether of the five points? Yes, indeed. Of course I should be a (magna) chartist for evermore, even without the previous predilection.

And what do you and Mrs. Martin say about O'Connell? Did you read last Saturday's 'Examiner'? Tell her that I welcomed her kind letter heartily, and that this is an answer to both of you. My best love to her always. May God bless you, dear Mr. Martin! Probably I have written your

patience to an end. If papa or anybody were in the roôm, I should have a remembrance for you.

I remain, myself,

Affectionately yours,

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Wednesday [December 1844].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Hardly had my letter gone to you yesterday, when your kind present and no*tet* arrived. I thank you for my boots with more than the warmth of the worsted, and feel all their merits to my soul (each sole) while I thank you. A pair of boots or shoes which 'can't be kicked off' is something highly desirable for me, in Wilson's opinion; and this is the first thing which struck *her*. But the 'great idea' 'à propos des bottes,' which occurred to myself, ought to be unspeakable, like Miss Martineau's great ideas — for I do believe it was — that I needn't have the trouble every morning, *now*, of putting on my stockings. . . .

My voice is thawing too, with all the rest. If the cold had lasted I should have been dumb in a day or two more, and as it was, I was forced to refuse to see Mrs. Jameson (who had the goodness to come again) because I couldn't speak much above my breath. But I was tolerably well and brave upon the whole. Oh, these murderous English winters. The wonder is, how anybody can live through them. . . .

Did I tell you, or Mr. Martin, that Rogers the poet, at eighty-three or four years of age, bore the bank robbery[1] with the light-hearted bearing of a man 'young and bold,' went out to dinner two or three times the same week, and

[1] A great robbery from Rogers' bank on November 23, 1844, in which the thieves carried off 40,000*l.* worth of notes, besides specie and securities.

said witty things on his own griefs. One of the other partners went to bed instead, and was not likely, I heard, to 'get over it.' I felt quite glad and proud for Rogers. He was in Germany last year, and this summer in Paris; but he *first* went to see Wordsworth at the Lakes.

It is a fine thing when a light burns so clear down into the socket, isn't it? I, who am not a devout admirer of the 'Pleasures of Memory,' do admire this perpetual youth and untired energy; it is a fine thing to my mind. Then, there are other noble characteristics about this Rogers. A common friend said the other day to Mr. Kenyon, 'Rogers hates me, I know. He is always saying bitter speeches in relation to me, and yesterday he said so and so. *But*,' he continued, 'if I were in distress, there is one man in the world to whom I would go without doubt and without hesitation, at once, and as to a brother, and *that* man is *Rogers*.' Not that I would choose to be obliged to a man who hated me; but it is an illustration of the fact that if Rogers is bitter in his words, which we all know he is, he is always benevolent and generous in his deeds. He makes an epigram on a man, and gives him a thousand pounds; and the deed is the truer expression of his own nature. An uncommon development of character, in any case.

May God bless you both!

Your most affectionate

BA.

I am going to tell you, in an antithesis, of the popularising of my poems. I had a sonnet the other day from Gutter Lane, Cheapside, and I heard that Count d'Orsay had written one of the stanzas of 'Crowned and Buried' at the bottom of an engraving of Napoleon which hangs in his room. Now I allow you to laugh at my vaingloriousness, and then you may pin it to Mrs. Best's satisfaction in the dedication to Dowager Majesty. By the way — no, out of the way — it is whispered that when Queen Victoria goes to

Strathfieldsea[1] (how do you spell it?) she means to visit Miss Mitford, to which rumour Miss Mitford (being that rare creature, a sensible woman) says: 'May God forbid.'

To John Kenyon

Wednesday morning [about December 1844].

I thank you, my dear cousin, and did so silently the day before yesterday, when you were kind enough to bring me the review and write the good news in pencil. I should be delighted to see you (this is to certify) notwithstanding the frost; only my voice having suffered, and being the ghost of itself, you might find it difficult to *hear* me without inconvenience. Which is for *you* to consider, and not for *me*. And indeed the fog, in addition to the cold, makes it inexpedient for anyone to leave the house except upon business and compulsion.

Oh no — we need not mind any scorn which assails Tennyson and *us* together. There is a dishonor that does honor — and 'this is of it.' I never heard of Barnes.[2]

Were you aware that the review you brought was in a newspaper called the 'League,' and laudatory to the utmost extravagance — praising us too for courage in opposing 'war and monopoly'? — the 'corn ships in the offing' being duly named. I have heard that it is probably written by Mr. Cobden himself, who writes for the journal in question, and is an enthusiast in poetry. If I thought so to the point of conviction, *do you know, I should be very much pleased?* You remember that I am a sort of (magna) chartist — only going a little farther!

Flush was properly ashamed of himself when he came upstairs again for his most ungrateful, inexplicable conduct

[1] Strathfieldsaye, the Duke of Wellington's house.

[2] William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, the first part of whose *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* appeared in 1844.

towards you; and I lectured him well; and upon asking him to 'promise never to behave ill to you again,' he kissed my hands and wagged his tail most emphatically. It altogether amounted to an oath, I think. The truth is that Flush's nervous system rather than his temper was in fault, and that, in that great cloak, he saw you as in a cloudy mystery. And then, when you stumbled over the bell rope, he thought the world was come to an end. He is not accustomed, you see, to the vicissitudes of life. Try to forgive him and me — for his ingratitude seems to 'strike through' to me; and I am not without remorse.

Ever most affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

I inclose Mr. Chorley's note which you left behind you, but which I did not see until just now. *You* know that I am not ashamed of '*progress*.' On the contrary, my only hope is in it. But the question is not *there*, nor, I think, for the public, except in cases of ripe, established reputations, as I said before.

To Mr. Westwood

(On returning some illustrations of Spenser by Mr. Woods)

December 11, 1844.

. . . With many thanks, cordial and true, I thank you for the pleasure I have enjoyed in connection with these proofs of genius. To be honest, it is my own personal opinion (I give it to you for as much as it is worth — not much!) that many of the subjects of these drawings are unfit for graphic representation. What we can bear to see in the poet's vision, and sustained on the wings of his divine music, we shrink from a little when brought face to face with, as drawn out in black and white. You will understand what I mean. The horror and terror preponderate in the drawings, and what is sublime in the poet

is apt to be extravagant in the artist — and this, not from a deficiency of power in the latter, but from a treading on ground forbidden except to the poet's foot. I may be wrong, perhaps — I do not pretend to be right. I only tell you (as you ask for them) what my impressions are.

I need not say that I wish all manner of success to your friend the artist, and laurels of the weight of gold while of the freshness of grass — alas! an impossible vegetable! — fabulous as the Halcyon!

To H. S. Boyd

Monday, December 24, 1844 [postmark].

My dearest Mr. Boyd, — I wish I had a note from you to-day — which optative aorist I am not sure of being either grammatical or reasonable! Perhaps you have expected to hear from *me* with more reason. . . .

I fancied that you would be struck by Miss Martineau's lucid and able style. She is a very admirable woman — and the most logical intellect of the age, for a woman. On this account it is that the men throw stones at her, and that many of her own sex throw dirt; but if I begin on this subject I shall end by gnashing my teeth. A righteous indignation fastens on me. I had a note from her the other day, written in a noble spirit, and saying, in reference to the insults lavished on her, that she was prepared from the first for *publicity*, and ventured it all for the sake of what she considered the truth — she was sustained, she said, by the recollection of Godiva.

Do you remember who Godiva was — or shall I tell you? Think of it — Godiva of Coventry, and peeping Tom. The worst and basest is, that in this nineteenth century there are thousands of Toms to one.

I think, however, myself, and with all my admiration for Miss Martineau, that her statement and her reasonings on it are not free from vagueness and apparent contra-

dictions. She writes in a state of enthusiasm, and some of her expressions are naturally coloured by her mood of mind and nerve.

May this Christmas give you ease and pleasantness, in various ways, my dearest friend! My Christmas wish for myself is to hear that you are well. I cannot bear to think of you suffering. Are the nights better? May God bless you. Shall you not think it a great thing if the poems go into a second edition within the twelvemonth? I am surprised at your not being satisfied. Consider what poetry is, and that four months have not passed since the publication of mine; and that, where poems have to make their way by force of *themselves*, and not of name nor of fashion, the first three months cannot present the period of the quickest sale. That must be for afterwards. Think of me on Christmas Day, as of one who gratefully loves you.

Elibet.

A passing reference in a previous letter (above, p. 217) has told of the beginning of another friendship, which was to hold a large place in Miss Barrett's later life; and the next letter is the first now extant which was written to this new friend, Anna Jameson. Mrs. Jameson had not at this time written the works on sacred art with which her name is now chiefly associated; but she was already engaged in her long struggle to earn her livelihood by her pen. Her first work, 'The Diary of an Ennuyée' (1826), written before her marriage, had attracted considerable attention. Since then she had written her 'Characteristics of Women,' 'Essays on Shakespeare's Female Characters,' 'Visits and Sketches,' and a number of compilations of less importance. Quite recently she had been engaged to write handbooks to the public and private art galleries of London, and had so embarked on the career of art authorship in which her best work was done.

The beginning and end of the following letter are lost. The subject of it is the long and hostile comment which appeared in the 'Athenæum' for December 28 on Miss Martineau's letters on mesmerism.

To Mrs. Jameson

[End of December 1844.]

. . . For the 'Athenæum,' I have always held it as a journal, first — in the very first rank — both in ability and integrity; and knowing Mr. Dilke *is* the 'Athenæum,' I could make no mistake in my estimation of himself. I have personal reasons for gratitude to both him and his journal, and I have always felt that it was honorable to me to have them. Also, I do not at all think that because a woman is a woman, she is on that account to be spared the ordinary risks of the arena in literature and philosophy. I think no such thing. Logical chivalry would be still more radically debasing to us than any other. It is not therefore at all as a Harriet Martineau, but as a thinking and feeling Martineau (now *don't* laugh), that I hold her to have been hardly used in the late controversy. And, if you don't laugh at *that*, don't be too grave either, with the thought of your own share and position in the matter; because, as must be obvious to everyone (yourself included), you did everything possible to you to prevent the catastrophe, and no man and no friend could have done better. My brother George told me of his conversation with you at Mr. Lough's, but *are* you not mistaken in fancying that she blames you, that she is cold with you? I really think you must be. Why, if she is displeased with you she must be unjust, *and is she ever unjust?* I ask you. *I* should imagine not, but then, with all my insolence of talking of her as my friend, I only admire and love her at a distance, in her books and in her letters, and do not know her face to face, and in living womanhood at all. She wrote to me once, and since we have corre-

sponded; and as in her kindness she has called me her friend, I leap hastily at an unripe fruit, perhaps, and echo back the word. She is your friend in a completer, or, at least, a more ordinary sense; and indeed it is impossible for me to believe without strong evidence that she could cease to be your friend on such grounds as are apparent. Perhaps she does not write because she cannot contain her wrath against Mr. Dilke (which, between ourselves, she cannot, very well), and respects your connection and regard for him. Is not *that* a 'peradventure' worth considering? I am sure that you have no *right* to be uneasy in any case.

And now I do not like to send you this letter without telling you my impression about mesmerism, lest I seem reserved and 'afraid of committing myself,' as prudent people are. I will confess, then, that my *impression* is in favour of the reality of mesmerism to some unknown extent. I particularly dislike believing it, I would rather believe most other things in the world; but the evidence of the 'cloud of witnesses' does thunder and lightning so in my ears and eyes, that I believe, while my blood runs cold. I would not be practised upon — no, not for one of Flushie's ears, and I hate the whole theory. It is hideous to my imagination, especially what is called phrenological mesmerism. After all, however, truth is to be accepted; and testimony, when so various and decisive, is an ascertainer of truth. Now do not tell Mr. Dilke, lest he excommunicate me.

But I will not pity you for the increase of occupation produced by an increase of such comfort as your mother's and sister's presence must give. What it will be for you to have a branch to sun yourself on, after a long flight against the wind!

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: January 3, 1845.

Dear Mr. Chorley, — I hope it will not be transgressing very much against the etiquette of journalism, or against the individual delicacy which is of more consequence to both of us, if I venture to thank you by one word for the pages which relate to me in your excellent article in the 'New Quarterly.' It is not my habit to thank or to remonstrate with my reviewers, and indeed I believe I may tell you that I never wrote to thank anyone before on these grounds. I could not thank anyone for praising me — I would not thank him for praising me against his conscience; and if he praised me to the measure of his conscience only, I should have little (as far as the praise went) to thank him for. Therefore I do not thank you for the praise in your article, but for the kind cordial spirit which pervades both praise and blame, for the willingness in praising, and for the gentleness in finding fault; for the encouragement without unseemly exaggeration, and for the criticisms without critical scorn. Allow me to thank you for these things and for the pleasure I have received by their means. I am bold to do it, because I hear that you confess the reviewership; and am the bolder, because I recognised your hand in an act of somewhat similar kindness in the 'Athenæum' at the first appearance of the poems.

While I am writing of the 'New Quarterly,' I take the liberty of making a remark, not of course in relation to myself — I know too well my duty to my judges — but to your view of the 'vantage ground of the poetesses of England. It is a strong impression with me that previous to Joanna Baillie there was no such thing in England as a poetess; and that so far from triumphing over the rest of the world in that particular product, we lay until then under the feet of the world. We hear of a Marie in Brittany who sang

songs worthy to be mixed with Chaucer's for true poetic sweetness, and in Italy a Vittoria Colonna sang her noble sonnets. But in England, where is our poetess before Joanna Baillie — poetess in the true sense? Lady Winchilsea had an *eye*, as Wordsworth found out; but the Duchess of Newcastle had more poetry in her — the comparative praise proving the negative position — than Lady Winchilsea. And when you say of the French, that they have only epistolary women and wits, while we have our Lady Mary, why what would Lady Mary be to us *but* for her letters and her wit? Not a poetess, surely! unless we accept for poetry her graceful *vers de société*.

Do forgive me if an impulse has carried me too far. It has been long 'a fact,' to my view of the matter, that Joanna Baillie is the first female poet in all senses in England; and I fell with the whole weight of fact and theory against the edge of your article.

I recall myself now to my first intention of being simply, but not silently, grateful to you; and entreating you to pardon this letter too quickly to think it necessary to answer it. . . .

I remain, very truly yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: January 7, 1845.

Dear Mr. Chorley, — You are very good to deign to answer my impertinences, and not to be disgusted by my defamations of 'the grandmothers,' and (to diminish my perversity in your eyes) I am ready to admit at once that we are generally too apt to run into premature classification — the error of all imperfect knowledge; and into unreasonable exclusiveness — the vice of it. We spoil the shining surface of life by our black lines drawn through and through, as if ominously for a game of the fox and goose. For my part,

however imperfect my practice may be, I am intimately convinced — and more and more since my long seclusion — that to live in a house with windows on every side, so as to catch both the morning and evening sunshine, is the best and brightest thing we have to do — to say nothing about the justest and wisest. Sympathies are our opportunities of good.

Moreover, I know nothing of your 'sweet mistress Anne.'[1] I never read a verse of hers. Ignorance goes for much, you see, in all our mal-criticisms, and my ignorance goes to this extent. I cannot write to you of your Anglo-American poetess.

Also, in my sweeping speech about the grandmothers, I should have stopped before such instances as the exquisite ballad of 'Auld Robin Gray,' which is attributed to a woman, and the pathetic 'Ballow my Babe,' which tradition calls 'Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament.' I have certain doubts of my own, indeed, in relation to both origins, and with regard to 'Robin Gray' in particular; but doubts are not worthy stuff enough to be taken into an argument, and certainly, therefore, I should have admitted those two ballads as worthy poems before the *Joannan æra.*

For what I ventured to say otherwise, would you not consent to join our sympathies, and receive the 'choir' (ah! but you are very cunningly subtle in your distinctions; I am afraid I was too simple for you) as agreeable writers of verses sometimes, leaving the word *poet* alone? Because, you see, what you call the 'bad dispensation' by no means accounts for the want of the faculty of poetry, strictly so called. England has had many learned women, not merely readers but writers of the learned languages, in Elizabeth's

[1] Probably Miss Anne Seward, a minor poetess who enjoyed considerable popularity at the end of the eighteenth century. Her elegies on Captain Cook and Major André went through several editions, as did her *Louisa*, a poetical novel, a class of composition in which she was the predecessor of Mrs. Browning herself. Her collected poetical works were edited after her death by Sir Walter Scott (1810).

time and afterwards — women of deeper acquirements than are common now in the greater diffusion of letters; and yet where were the poetesses? The divine breath which seemed to come and go, and, ere it went, filled the land with that crowd of true poets whom we call the old dramatists — why did it never pass, even in the lyrical form, over the lips of a woman? How strange! And can we deny that it was so? I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none. It is not in the filial spirit I am deficient, I do assure you — witness my reverent love of the grandfathers!

Seriously, I do not presume to enter into argument with you, and this in relation to a critical paper which I admire in so many ways and am grateful for in some; but is not the poet a different man from the cleverest versifier, and is it not well for the world to be taught the difference? The divineness of poetry is far more to me than either pride of sex or personal pride, and, though willing to acknowledge the lowest breath of the inspiration, I cannot the 'powder and patch.' As powder and patch I may, but not as poetry. And though I in turn may suffer for this myself — though I too (*anch' io*) may be turned out of 'Arcadia,' and told that I am not a poet, still, I should be content, I hope, that the divineness of poetry be proved in my humanness, rather than lowered to my uses.

But you shall not think me exclusive. Of poor L. E. L. for instance, I could write with *more* praiseful appreciation than you can. It appears to me that she had the gift — though in certain respects she dishonored the art — and her latter lyrics are, many of them, of great beauty and melody, such as, having once touched the ear of a reader, live on in it. I observe in your 'Life of Mrs. Hemans' (shall I tell you how often I have read those volumes?) she (Mrs. H.) never appears, in any given letter or recorded opinion, to esteem her contemporary. The antagonism lay, probably, in the higher parts of Mrs. Hemans's character and mind, and we are not to wonder at it.

It is very pleasant to me to have your approbation of the sonnets on George Sand, on the points of feeling and rightness, on which all my readers have not absolved me equally, I have reason to know. I am more a latitudinarian in literature than it is generally thought expedient for women to be; and I have that admiration for *genius* which dear Mr. Kenyon calls my 'immoral sympathy with power;' and if Madame Dudevant[1] is not the first female genius of any country or age, I really do not know who is. And then she has certain noblenesses — granting all the evil and 'perilous stuff' — noblenesses and royalnesses which make me loyal. Do pardon me for intruding all this on you, though you cannot justify me — *you*, who are occupied beyond measure, and *I*, who know it! I have been under the delusion, too, during this writing, of having something like a friend's claim to write and be troublesome. I have lived so near your friends that I keep the odour of them! A mere delusion, alas! my only personal right in respect to you being one that I am not likely to forget or waive — the right of being grateful to you.

But so, and looking again at the last words of your letter, I see that you 'wish,' in the kindest of words, 'to do something more for me.' I hope some day to take this 'something more' of your kindness out in the pleasure of personal intercourse; and if, in the meantime, you should consent to flatter my delusion by letting me hear from you now and then, if ever you have a moment to waste and inclination to waste it, why I, on my side, shall always be ready to thank you for the 'something more' of kindness, as bound in the duty of gratitude. In any case I remain

Truly and faithfully yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

[1] The real name of George Sand.

To Mr. Chorley

[*The beginning of this letter is lost*]

[1845.]

. . . to the awful consideration of the possibility of my reading a novel or caring for the story of it (*proh pudor!*), that I am probably, not to say certainly, the most complete and unscrupulous romance reader within your knowledge. Never was a child who cared more for 'a story' than I do; never even did I myself, *as* a child, care more for it than I do. My love of fiction began with my breath, and will end with it; and goes on increasing; and the heights and depths of the consumption which it has induced you may guess at perhaps, but it is a sublime idea from its vastness, and will gain on you but slowly. On my tombstone may be written '*Ci gît* the greatest novel reader in the world,' and nobody will forbid the inscription; and I approve of Gray's notion of paradise more than of his lyrics, when he suggests the reading of romances ever new, εις τους αιωνας. Are you shocked at me? Perhaps so. And you see I make no excuses, as an invalid might. Invalid or not, I should have a romance in a drawer, if not behind a pillow, and I might as well be true and say so. There is the love of literature, which is one thing, and the love of fiction, which is another. And then, I am not fastidious, as Mrs. Hemans was, in her high purity, and therefore the two loves have a race-course clear.

This is a long preface to coming to speak of the 'Improvisatore.'[1] I had sent for it already to the library, and shall dun them for it twice as much for the sake of what you say. Only I hope I may care for the story. I shall try.

[1] By Hans Andersen; an English translation by Mary Howitt was published in 1845.

And for the *rococo*, I have more feeling for it, in a sense, than I once had, for, some two years ago, I passed through a long dynasty of French memoirs, which made me feel quite differently about the littlenesses of greatnesses. I measured them all from the heights of the 'tabouret,'[1] and was a good Duchess, in the 'non-natural' meaning, for the moment. Those memoirs are charming of their kind, and if life were cut in filagree paper would be profitable reading to the soul. Do you not think so? And you mean besides, probably, that you care for *beauty in detail*, which we all should do if our senses were better educated.

So the confession is not a dreadful one, after all, and mine may involve more evil, and would to ninety-nine out of a hundred 'sensible and cultivated people.' Think what Mrs. Ellis would say to the 'Women of England' about me in her fifteenth edition, if she knew!

And do *you* know that dear Miss Mitford spent this day week with me, notwithstanding the rain?

Very truly yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

I have forgotten what I particularly wished to say — viz. that I never thought of *expecting* to hear from you. I understand that when you write it is pure grace, and never to be expected. You have too much to do, I understand perfectly.

The east wind seems to be blowing all my letters about to-day; the *t*'s and *e*'s wave like willows. Now if crooked *e*'s mean a 'greenshade' (not taken rurally), what awful significance can have the whole crooked alphabet?

[1] Duchesses in the French court had the privilege of seating themselves on a *tabouret* or stool while the King took his meals; hence the *droit du tabouret* comes to mean the rank of a duchess.

To Mrs. Martin

Saturday, January 1844 [should be 1845].[1]

I must tell you, my dearest Mrs. Martin, Mr. Kenyon has read to me an extract from a private letter addressed by H. Martineau to Moxon the publisher, to the effect that Lord Morpeth was down on his knees in the middle of the room a few nights ago, in the presence of the somnambule J., and conversing with her in Greek and Latin, that the four Miss Liddels were also present, and that they five talked to her during one *séance* in five foreign languages, viz. Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and German. When the mesmeriser touches the organ of *imitation* on J.'s head, while the strange tongue is in the course of being addressed to her, she translates into English word for word what is said; but when the organ of *language* is touched, she simply answers in English what is said.

My 'few words of comment' upon this are, that I feel to be more and more standing on my head — which does not mean, you will be pleased to observe, that I understand.

Well, and how are you both going on? My voice is quite returned; and papa continues, I am sorry to say, to have a bad cold and cough. He means to stay in the house to-day and try what prudence will do.

We have heard from Henry, at Alexandria still, but a few days before sailing, and he and Stormie are bringing home, as a companion to Flushie, a beautiful little gazelle. What do you think of it? I would rather have it than the 'babby,' though the flourish of trumpets on the part of the possessors seems quite in favor of the latter.

And I had a letter from Browning the poet last night, which threw me into ecstasies — Browning, the author of 'Paracelsus,' and king of the mystics.

[*The rest of this letter is missing.*]

[1] The mention of her brothers' being at Alexandria is sufficient to show that 1845 must be the true date.

To Mrs. Martin

Saturday, January 1845.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I believe our last letters crossed, and we might draw lots for the turn of receiving one, so that you are to take it for supererogatory virtue in me altogether if I begin to write to you as 'at these presents.' But I want to know how you both are, and if your last account may continue to be considered the true one. You have been poising yourself on the equal balance of letters, as weak consciences are apt to do, but I write that you may write, and also, a little, that I may thank you for the kindness of your last letter, which was so very kind.

No, indeed, dearest Mrs. Martin. If I do not say oftener that I have a strong and grateful trust in your affection for me, and therefore in your interest in all that concerns me, it is not that it is less strong and grateful. What I said or sang of Miss Martineau's letter was no consequence of a distrust of *you*, but of a feeling within myself that for me to show about such a letter was scarcely becoming, and, in the matter of modesty, nowise discreet. I suppose I was writing excuses to myself for showing it to you. I cannot otherwise account for the saying and singing. And, for the rest, nobody can say or sing that I am not frank enough to you — to the extent of telling all manner of nonsense about myself which can only be supposed to be interesting on the ground of your being presupposed to care a little for the person concerned. Now am I not frank enough? And by the way, I send you 'The Seraphim'[1] at last, by this day's railroad.

Thursday.

To prove to you that I had not forgotten you before your letter came, here is the fragment of an unfinished one which I send you, to begin with — an imperfect fossil letter,

[1] A copy of the 1838 volume for which Mrs. Martin had asked.

which no comparative anatomy will bring much sense out of — except the plain fact *that you were not forgotten*. . . .

From Alexandria we heard yesterday that they sailed from thence on the first of January, and the home passage may be long.

The *changes* in Mary Minto on account of mesmerism were merely imaginary as far as I can understand. Nobody here observed any change in her. Oh no. These things will be fancied sometimes. That she is an enthusiastic girl, and that the subject took strong hold upon her, is true enough, and not the least in the world — according to my mind — to be wondered at. By the way, I had a letter and the present of a work on mesmerism — Mr. Newnham's — from his daughter, who sent it to me the other day, in the kindest way, 'out of gratitude for my poetry,' as she says, and from a desire that it might do me physical good in the matter of health. I do not at all know her. I wrote to thank her, of course, for the kindness and sympathy which, as she expressed them, quite touched me; and to explain how I did not stand in reach just now of the temptations of mesmerism. I might have said that I shrank nearly as much from these 'temptations' as from Lord Bacon's stew of infant children for the purposes of witchcraft.

Well, then, I am getting deeper and deeper into correspondence with Robert Browning, poet and mystic, and we are growing to be the truest of friends. If I live a little longer shut up in this room, I shall certainly know everybody in the world. Mrs. Jameson came again yesterday, and was very agreeable, but tried vainly to convince me that the 'Vestiges of Creation,' which I take to be one of the most melancholy books in the world, is the most comforting, and that Lady Byron was an angel of a wife. I persisted (in relation to the former clause) in a 'determinate counsel' not to be a fully developed monkey if I could help it, but when Mrs. J. assured me that she knew all the

circumstances of the separation, though she could not betray a confidence, and entreated me 'to keep my mind open' on a subject which would one day be set in the light, I stroked down my feathers as well as I could, and listened to reason. You know — or perhaps you do *not* know — that there are two women whom I have hated all my life long — *Lady Byron and Marie Louise*. To prove how false the public effigy of the former is, however, Mrs. Jameson told me that she knew *nothing of mathematics, nothing of science*, and that the element preponderating in her mind is the *poetical* element — that she cares much for *my* poetry! How deep in the knowledge of the depths of vanity must Mrs. J. be, to tell me *that* — now mustn't she? But there was — yes, and is — a strong adverse feeling to work upon, and it is not worked away.

Then, I have seen a copy of a note of Lord Morpeth to H. Martineau, to the effect that he considered the mesmeric phenomena witnessed by him (inclusive, remember, of the *languages*) to be 'equally beautiful, wonderful, and *undeniable*,' but he is prudent enough to desire that no use should be made of this letter. . . . And now no more for to-day.

With love to Mr. Martin, ever believe me

Your affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

Saturday, February 8, 1845.

I return to you, dearest Mr. Kenyon, the two numbers of Jerold Douglas's[1] magazine, and I wish 'by that same sign' I could invoke your presence and advice on a letter I received this morning. You never would guess what it is, and you will wonder when I tell you that it offers a request from the *Leeds Ladies Committee*, authorised and backed by the London *General Council of the League*, to your

[1] Evidently a slip of the pen for Douglas Jerrold, whose 'Shilling Magazine' began to come out in 1845.

cousin Ba, that she would write them a poem for the Corn Law Bazaar to be holden at Covent Garden next May. Now my heart is with the cause, and my vanity besides, perhaps, for I do not deny that I am pleased with the request so made, and if left to myself I should be likely at once to say 'yes,' and write an agricultural-evil poem to complete the factory-evil poem into a national-evil circle. And I do not myself see how it would be implicating my name with a political party to the extent of wearing a badge. The League is not a party, but 'the meeting of the waters' of several parties, and I am trying to persuade papa's Whiggery that I may make a poem which will be a fair exponent of the actual grievance, leaving the remedy free for the hands of fixed-duty men like him, or free-trade women like myself. As to wearing the badge of a party, either in politics or religion, I may say that never in my life was I so far from coveting such a thing. And then poetry breathes in another outer air. And then there is not an existent set of any-kind-of-politics I could agree with if I tried — *I*, who am a sort of fossil republican! You shall see the letters when you come. Remember what the 'League' newspaper said of the 'Cry of the Children.'

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To Miss Commeline

50 Wimpole Street: [February–March 1845].

My dear Miss Commeline, — I do hope that you will allow me to appear to remember you as I never have ceased to do in reality, and at a time when sympathy of friends is generally acceptable, to offer you mine as if I had some right of friendship to do so. And I am encouraged the more to attempt this because I never shall forget that in the hour of the bitterest agony of my life your brother wrote me a letter which, although I did not read it, I was too ill and distracted, I was yet shown the outside of some months

afterwards and enabled to appreciate the sympathy fully. Such a kindness could not fail to keep alive in me (if the need of keeping alive *were!*) the memory of the various kindnesses received by me and mine from all your family, nor fail to excite me to desire to impress upon you my remembrance of *you* and my regard, and the interest with which I hear of your joys and sorrows whenever they are large enough to be seen from such a distance. Try to believe this of me, dear Miss Commeline, yourself, and let your sisters and your brother believe it also. If sorrow in its reaction makes us think of our friends, let my name come among the list of yours to you, and with it let the thought come that I am not the coldest and least sincere. May God bless and comfort you, I say, with a full heart knowing what afflictions like yours are and must be, but confident besides that 'we know not what we do' in weeping for the dearest. In our sorrow we see the rough side of the stuff; in our joys the smooth; and who shall say that when the taffeta is turned the most *silk* may not be in the sorrows? It is true, however, that sorrows are heavy, and that sometimes the conditions of life (which sorrows are) seem hard to us and overcoming, and I believe that much suffering is necessary before we come to learn that the world is a good place to live in and a good place to die in for even the most affectionate and sensitive.

How glad I should be to hear from you some day, when it is not burdensome for you to write at length and fully concerning all of you — of your sister Maria, and of Laura, and of your brother, and of all your occupations and plans, and whether it enters into your dreams, not to say plans, ever to come to London, or to follow the track of your many neighbours across the seas, perhaps. . . .

For ourselves we have the happiness of seeing our dear papa so well, that I am almost justified in fancying happily that you would not think him altered. He has perpetual youth like the gods, and I may make affidavit to your brother

nevertheless that we never boiled him up to it. Also his spirits are good and his 'step on the stair' so light as to comfort me for not being able to run up and down them myself. I am essentially better in health, but remain weak and shattered and at the mercy of a breath of air through a crevice; and thus the unusually severe winter has left me somewhat lower than usual without surprising anybody. Henrietta and Arabel are quite well and at home; George on circuit, always obliged by your proffered hospitality; and Charles John and Henry returning from a voyage to Alexandria in papa's own vessel, the 'Statira.' I set you an imperfect example of egotism, and hope that you will double my *I's* and *we's*, and kindly trust to me for being interested in yours. . . .

Yours affectionately,
E. B. BARRETT.

To H. S. Boyd

Saturday, March 3, 1845.

My dearest Friend, — I am aware that I should have written to you before, but the cold weather is apt to disable me and to make me feel idle when it does not do so quite. Now I am going to write about your remarks on the 'Dublin Review.'

Certainly I agree with you that there can be no necessity for explaining anything about the tutorship if you do not kick against the pricks of the insinuation yourself, and especially as I consider that you *were* in a sense my 'tutor,' inasmuch as I may say, both that nobody ever taught me so much Greek as you, and also that without you I should have probably lived and died without any knowledge of the Greek Fathers. The Greek classics I should have studied by love and instinct; but the Fathers would probably have remained in their sepulchres, as far as my reading them was concerned. Therefore, very gratefully do I turn to you as

my 'tutor' in the best sense, and the more persons call you so, the better it is for the pleasures of my gratitude. The review amused me by hitting on the right meaning there, and besides by its percipiency about your remembering me during your travels in the East, and sending me home the Cyprus wine. Some of these reviewers have a wonderful gift at inferences. The 'Metropolitan Magazine' for March (which is to be sent to you when papa has read it) contains a flaming article in my favour, calling me 'the friend of Wordsworth,' and, moreover, a very little lower than the angels. You shall see it soon, and it is only just out, of course, being the March number. The praise is beyond thanking for, and then I do not know whom to thank — I cannot at all guess at the writer.

I have had a kind note from Lord Teynham, whose oblivion I had ceased to doubt, it seemed so *proved* to me that he had forgotten me. But he writes kindly, and it gave me pleasure to have some sign of recollection, if not of regard, from one whom I consider with unalterable and grateful respect, and shall always, although I am aware that he denies all sympathy to my works and ways in literature and the world. In fact, and to set my poetry aside, he has joined that 'strait sect' of the Plymouth Brethren, and, of course, has straitened his views since we met, and I, by the reaction of solitude and suffering, have broken many bands which held me at that time. He was always straiter than I, and now the difference is immense. For I think the world wider than I once thought it, and I see God's love broader than I once saw it. To the 'Touch not, taste not, handle not' of the strict religionists, I feel inclined to cry, 'Touch, taste, handle, *all things are pure*.' But I am writing this for you and not for him, and you probably will agree with me, if you think as you used to think, at least.

But I do not agree with *you* on the League question, nor on the woman question connected with it, only we will not

quarrel to-day, and I have written enough already without an argument at the end.

Can you guess what I have been doing lately? Washing out my conscience, effacing the blot on my escutcheon, performing an expiation, translating over again from the Greek the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus.

Yes, my very dear friend, I could not bear to let that frigid, rigid exercise, called a version and called mine, cold as Caucasus, and flat as the neighbouring plain, stand as my work. A palinodia, a recantation was necessary to me, and I have achieved it. Do you blame me or not? Perhaps I may print it in a magazine, but this is not decided. How delighted I am to think of your being well. It makes me very happy.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

ELIBET.

To Mr. Westwood

March 4, 1845.

I reproach myself, dear Mr. W., for my silence, and began to do so before your kind note reminded me of its unkindness. I had indeed my pen in my hand three days ago to write to you, but a cross fate plucked at my sleeve for the ninety-ninth time, and left me guilty. And you do not write to reproach me! You only avenge yourself softly by keeping back all news of your health, and by not saying a word of the effect on you of the winter which has done its spiriting so ungently. Which brings me down to myself. For somebody has been dreaming of me, and dreams, you know, must go by contraries. And how could it be otherwise? Although I am on the whole essentially better — on the whole! — yet the peculiar severity of the winter has acted on me, and the truth is that for the last month, precisely the last month, I have been feeling ('off and on,' as people say) very uncomfortable. Not that I

am essentially worse, but essentially better, on the contrary, only that the feeling of discomfort and trouble at the heart (physically) *will* come with the fall of the thermometer, and the voice will go! . . .

And then I have another question to enunciate — will the oracle answer?

Do you know *who wrote the article in the 'Metropolitan'?* Beseech you, answer me. I have a suspicion, true, that the critics have been supernaturally kind to me, but the kindness of this 'Metropolitan' critic so passes the ordinary limit of kindness, metropolitan or critical, that I cannot but look among my personal friends for the writer of the article. Coming to personal friends, I reject one on one ground and one on another — for one the graciousness is too graceful, and for another the grace almost too gracious. I am puzzled and dizzy with doubt; and — is it you? Answer me, will you? If so, I should owe so much gratitude to you. Suffer me to pay it! — permit the pleasure to me of paying it! — for I know too much of the pleasures of gratitude to be willing to lose one of them.

To John Kenyon

March 6, [1845].

Thank you, dearest Mr. Kenyon — they are very fine. The poetry is in *them*, rather than in Blair. And now I send them back, and Cunningham and Jerrold, with thanks on thanks; and if you will be kind enough not to insist on my reading the letters to Travis[1] within the 'hour,' they shall wait for the 'Responsibility,' and the two go to you together.

And as to the tiring, it has not been much, and the happy day was well worth being tired *for*. It is better to be tired with pleasure than with frost; and if I have the

[1] By Porson, on the authenticity of 1 John v. 7.

last fatigue too, why it is March, and it is the hour of my martyrdom always. But I am not ill — only uncomfortable.

Ah, the 'relenting'! it is rather a bad sign, I am afraid; notwithstanding the subtilty of your consolations; but I stroke down my philosophy, to make it shine, like a cat's back in the dark. The argument from more deserving poets who prosper less is not very comforting, is it? I trow not.

But as to the review, be sure — be very sure that it is not Mr. Browning's. How you could *think* even of Mr. Browning, surprises me. Now, as for me, I know as well *as he does himself* that he has had nothing to do with it.

I should rather suspect Mr. Westwood, the author of some fugitive poems, who writes to me sometimes; and the suspicion having occurred to me, I have written to put the question directly. You shall hear, if I hear in reply.

May God bless you always. I have heard from dear Miss Mitford.

Ever affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

March 29, 1845 [postmark].

My dearest Mr. Boyd, — As Arabel has written out for you the glorification of 'Peter of York,'[1] I shall use an edge of the same paper to 'fall on your sense' with my gratitude about the Cyprus wine. Indeed, I could almost upbraid you for sending me another bottle. It is most supererogatory kindness in you to think of such a thing. And I accept it, nevertheless, with thanks instead of re-

[1] A monster bell for York Minster, then being exhibited at the Baker Street Bazaar. Mr. Boyd was an enthusiast on bells and bell ringing.

monstrances, and promise you to drink your health in and the spring in together, and the east wind out, if you do not object to it. I have been better for several days, but my heart is not yet very orderly — not being able to recover the veins, I suppose, all in a moment.

For the rest, you always mean what is right and affectionate, and I am not apt to mistake your meanings in this respect. Be indulgent to me as far as you can, when it appears to you that I sink far below your religious standard, as I am sure I must do oftener than you remind me. Also, it certainly does appear, to my mind, that we are not, as Christians, called to the exclusive expression of Christian doctrine, either in poetry or prose. All truth and all beauty and all music belong to God — He is in all things; and in speaking of all, we speak of Him. In poetry, which includes all things, 'the diapason closeth full in God.' I would not lose a note of the lyre, and whatever He has included in His creation I take to be holy subject enough for *me*. That I am blamed for this view by many, I know, but I cannot see it otherwise, and when you pay your visit to 'Peter of York' and me, and are able to talk everything over, we shall agree tolerably well, I do not doubt.

Ah, what a dream! What a thought! Too good even to come true!

I did not think that you would much like the 'Duchess May;' but among the *profanum vulgus* you cannot think how successful it has been. There was an account in one of the fugitive reviews of a lady falling into hysterics on the perusal of it, although *that* was nothing to the gush of tears of which there is a tradition, down the Plutonian cheeks of a lawyer unknown, over 'Bertha in the Lane.' But these things should not make anybody vain. It is the *story* that has power with people, just what *you* do not care for!

About the reviews you ask a difficult question; but I

suppose the best, as reviews, are the 'Dublin Review,' 'Blackwood,' the 'New Quarterly,' and the last 'American,' I forget the title at this moment, the *Whig* 'American,' *not* the Democrat. The most favorable to me are certainly the American unremembered, and the late 'Metropolitan,' which last was written, I hear, by Mr. Charles Grant, a voluminous writer, but no poet. I consider myself singularly happy in my reviews, and to have full reason for gratitude to the profession.

I forgot to say that what the Dublin reviewer did me the honor of considering an Irishism was the expression 'Do you mind' in 'Cyprus Wine.' But he was wrong, because it occurs frequently among our elder English writers, and is as British as London porter.

Now see how you throw me into figurative liquids, by your last Cyprus. It is the true celestial, this last. But Arabel pleased me most by bringing back so good an account of *you*.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

ELIBET.

To John Kenyon

Friday [about January–March 1845].

Dearest Mr. Kenyon, — If your good nature is still not at ease, through doubting about how to make Lizzy happy in a book, you will like to hear perhaps that I have thought of a certain 'Family Robinson Crusoe,' translated from the *German*, I think, *not* a Robinson *purified*, mind, but a Robinson multiplied and compounded.[1] Children like reading it, I believe. And then there is a 'Masterman Ready,' or some name like it, by Captain Marryat, also popular with young readers. Or 'Seaward's Narrative,' by Miss Porter, would delight her, as it did *me*, not so many years ago.

[1] No doubt *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

I mention these books, but know nothing of their price; and only because you ask me, I do mention them. The fact is that she is not hard to please as to literature, and will be delighted with anything.

To-day Mr. Poe sent me a volume containing his poems and tales collected, so now I *must* write and thank him for his dedication. What is to be said, I wonder, when a man calls you the 'noblest of your sex'? 'Sir, you are the most discerning of yours.'

Were you thanked for the garden ticket yesterday? No, everybody was ungrateful, down to Flush, who drinks day by day out of his new purple cup, and had it properly explained how *you* gave it to him (*I* explained *that*), and yet never came upstairs to express to you his sense of obligation.

Affectionately yours always,

E. B. B.

To John Kenyon

Saturday [beginning of April 1845].

My dearest Cousin, — After all *I* said to *you*, said the other day, about Apuleius, and about what couldn't, shouldn't, and mustn't be done in the matter, I ended by trying the unlawful art of translating this prose into verse, and, one after another, have done all the subjects of the Poniatowsky gems Miss Thompson sent the list of, except *two*, which I am doing and shall finish anon.[1] In the meantime it comes into my head that it is just as well for you to look over my doings, and judge whether anything in them is to the purpose, or at all likely to be acceptable. Especially I am anxious to impress on you that, if I could think for a

[1] These versions were not published in Mrs. Browning's lifetime, but were included in the posthumous *Last Poems* (1862). They now appear in the *Poetical Works*, v. 72–83.

moment *you would hesitate about rejecting the whole in a body*, from any consideration for *me*, I should not merely be vexed but pained. Am I not your own cousin, to be ordered about as you please? And so take notice that I will not *bear* the remotest approach to ceremony in the matter. What is wrong? what is right? what is too much? those are the only considerations.

Apuleius is *florid*, which favored the poetical design on his sentences. Indeed he is more florid than I have always liked to make my verses. It is not, of course, an absolute translation, but as a running commentary on the text it is sufficiently faithful.

But probably (I say to myself) you do not want so many illustrations, and all too from one hand?

The two I do not send are 'Psyche contemplating Cupid asleep,' and 'Psyche and the Eagle.'

And I wait to hear how Polyphemus is to *look* — and also Adonis.

The Magazine goes to you with many thanks. The sonnet is full of force and expression, and I like it as well as ever I did — better even!

Oh — such happy news to-day! The 'Statira' is at Plymouth, and my brothers quite well, notwithstanding their hundred days on the sea! *It makes me happy.*

Yours most affectionately,

BA.

You shall have your 'Radical' almost immediately. I am ashamed. *In such haste.*

To H. S. Boyd

April 3, 1845.

My very dear Friend, — I have been intending every day to write to tell you that the Cyprus wine is as nectareous as possible, so fit for the gods, in fact, that I have been forced

to leave it off as unfit for *me;* it made me so feverish. But I keep it until the sun shall have made me a little less mortal; and in the meantime recognise thankfully both its high qualities and *your* kind ones. How delightful it is to have this sense of a summer at hand. *Shall* I see you this summer, I wonder. That is a question among my dreams.

By the last American packet I had two letters, one from a poet in Massachusetts, and another from a poetess: the *he*, Mr. Lowell, and the *she*, Mrs. Sigourney. She says that the sound of my poetry is stirring the 'deep green forests of the New World;' which sounds pleasantly, does it not? And I understand from Mr. Moxon that a new edition will be called for before very long, only not immediately. . . .

Your affectionate and grateful friend,

ELIBET.

Arabel and Mr. Hunter talk of paying you a visit some day.

To Mrs. Martin

April 3, 1845.

My dearest Mrs. Martin,—I wrote to you not many days ago, but I must tell you that our voyagers are safe in Sandgate break in 'an ugly hulk' (as poor Stormie says despondingly), suffering three or four days of quarantine agony, and that we expect to see them on Monday or Tuesday in the full bloom of their ill humour. I am happy to think, according to the present symptoms, that the mania for sea voyages is considerably abated. 'Nothing could be more miserable,' exclaims Storm; 'the only comfort of the whole four months is the safety of the beans, tell papa'—and the safety of the beans is rather a Pythagoræan[1] equivalent for four months' vexation, though not a bean of them all

[1] Referring to the Pythagorean doctrine of the sanctity of beans.

should have lost in freshness and value! He could scarcely write, he said, for the chilblains on his hands, and was in utter destitution of shirts and sheets. Oh! I have very good hopes that for the future Wimpole Street may be found endurable.

Well, and you are at once angry and satisfied, I suppose, about Maynooth; just as I am! satisfied with the justice as far as it goes, and angry and disgusted at the hideous shrieks of intolerance and bigotry which run through the country. The dissenters have very nearly disgusted me, what with the Education clamour, and the Presbyterian chapel cry, and now this Maynooth cry; and certainly it is wonderful how people can see rights as rights in their own hands, and as wrongs in the hands of their opposite neighbours. Moreover it seems to me atrocious that we who insist on seven millions of Catholics supporting a church they call heretical, should *dare* to talk of our scruples (conscientious scruples forsooth!) about assisting with a poor pittance of very insufficient charity their 'damnable idolatry.' Why, every cry of complaint we utter is an argument against the wrong we have been committing for years and years, and must be so interpreted by every honest and disinterested thinker in the world. Of course I should prefer the Irish establishment coming down, to any endowment at all; I should prefer a trial of the voluntary system throughout Ireland; but as it is adjudged on all hands impossible to attempt this in the actual state of parties and countries, why this Maynooth grant and subsequent endowment of the Catholic Church in Ireland seem the simple alternative, obviously and on the first principles of justice. Macaulay was very great, was he not? He appeared to me *conclusive* in logic and sentiment. The sensation everywhere is extraordinary, I am sorry really to say!

Wordsworth is in London, having been commanded up to the Queen's ball. He went in Rogers's court dress, or did I tell you so the other day? And I hear that the

fair Majesty of England was quite 'fluttered' at seeing him. 'She had not a word to say,' said Mrs. Jameson, who came to see me the other day and complained of the omission as 'unqueenly;' but I disagreed with her and thought the being '*fluttered*' far the highest compliment. But she told me that a short time ago the Queen confessed she never had read Wordsworth, on which a maid of honour observed, 'That is a pity, he would do your Majesty a great deal of good.' Mrs. Jameson declared that Miss Murray, a maid of honour, very deeply attached to the Queen, assured her (Mrs. J.) of the answer being quite as abrupt as *that;* as direct, and to the purpose; and no offence intended or received. I like Mrs. Jameson better the more I see her, and with grateful reason, she is so kind. Now do write directly, and let me hear of you [in d]etail. And tell Mr. Martin to make a point of coming home to us, with no grievances but political ones. The Bazaar is to be something sublime in its degree, and I shall have a sackcloth feeling all next week. All the rail carriages will be wound up to radiate into it, I hear, and the whole country is to be shot into the heart of London.

May God bless you.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

I hear that Guizot suffers intensely, and that there are fears lest he may sink. Not that the complaint is mortal.

To Mr. Westwood

Wimpole Street: April 9, 1845.

Poor Hood! Ah! I had feared that the scene was closing on him. And I am glad that a little of the poor gratitude of the world is laid down at his door just now to muffle to his dying ear the harsher sounds of life. I forgive much to Sir Robert for the sake of that letter —

though, after all, the minister is not high-hearted, or made of heroic stuff.[1]

I am delighted that you should appreciate Mr. Browning's high power — very high, according to my view — very high, and various. Yes, 'Paracelsus' you *should* have. 'Sordello' has many fine things in it, but, having been thrown down by many hands as unintelligible, and retained in mine as certainly of the Sphinxine literature, with all its power, I hesitate to be imperious to you in my recommendations of it. Still, the book *is* worth being *studied*— study is necessary to it, as, indeed, though in a less degree, to all the works of this poet; study is peculiarly necessary to it. He is a true poet, and a poet, I believe, of a large '*future in -rus, about to be*.' He is only growing to the height he will attain.

To Mr. Westwood

April 1845.

The sin of Sphinxine literature I admit. Have I not struggled hard to renounce it? Do I not, day by day? Do you know that I have been told that *I* have written things harder to interpret than Browning himself? — only I cannot, cannot believe it — he is so very hard. Tell me honestly (and although I attributed the excessive good nature of the 'Metropolitan' criticism to you, I *know* that you can speak the truth *truly!*) if anything like the Sphinxineness of Browning, you discover in me; take me as far back as 'The Seraphim' volume and answer! As for Browning, the fault is certainly great, and the disadvantage scarcely calculable, it is so great. He cuts his language into bits, and one has to join them together, as young children do their dissected maps, in order to make any meaning at all, and to study hard before one can do it. Not that I grudge the study

[1] Hood died on May 3, 1845; while on his death-bed he received from Sir Robert Peel the notification that he had conferred on him a pension of 100*l.* a year, with remainder to his wife.

or the time. The depth and power of the significance (when it is apprehended) glorifies the puzzle. With you and me it is so; but with the majority of readers, even of readers of poetry, it is not and cannot be so.

The consequence is, that he is not read except in a peculiar circle very strait and narrow. He will not die, because the principle of life is in him, but he will not live the warm summer life which is permitted to many of very inferior faculty, because he does not come out into the sun.

Faithfully your friend,

E. B. BARRETT.

The following letter relates to the controversy raging round Miss Martineau and her mesmerism. Miss Barrett had evidently referred to it in a letter to Mr. Chorley, which has not been preserved.

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: April 28, 1845.

Dear Mr. Chorley, — I felt quite sure that you would take my postscript for a womanish thing, and a little doubtful whether you would not take the whole allusion (in or out of a postscript) for an impertinent thing; but the impulse to speak was stronger than the fear of speaking; and from the peculiarities of my position, I have come to write by impulses, just as other people talk by them. Still, if I had known that the subject was so painful to you, I certainly would not have touched on it, strong as my feeling has been about it, and full and undeniable as is my sympathy with our noble-minded friend, both as a woman and a thinker. Not that I consider (of course I cannot) that she has made out anything like a '*fact*' in the Tynemouth story — not that I think the evidence offered in any sort sufficient; take it as it was in the beginning and unimpugned — not that I have been otherwise than of opinion throughout

that she was precipitate and indiscreet, however generously so, in her mode and time of advocating the mesmeric question; but that she is at liberty as a thinking being (in my mind) to hold an opinion, the grounds of which she cannot yet justify to the world. Do you not think she may be? Have you not opinions yourself beyond what you can prove to others? Have we not all? And because some of the links of the outer chain of a logical argument fail, or seem to fail, are we therefore to have our 'honours' questioned, because we do not yield what is suspended to an inner uninjured chain of at once subtler and stronger formation? For what I venture to object to in the argument of the 'Athenæum' is the making a *moral obligation* of an *intellectual act*, which is the first step and gesture (is it not?) in all persecution for opinion; and the involving of the 'honour' of an opponent in the motion of recantation she is invited to. This I do venture to exclaim against. I do cry aloud against this; and I do say this, that when we call it 'hard,' we are speaking of it softly. Why, consider how it is! The 'Athenæum' has done quite enough to *disprove the proving* of the wreck story,[1] and no more at all. The disproving of the proof of the wreck story is indeed enough to disprove the wreck story and to disprove mesmerism itself (as far as the proof of mesmerism depends on the proof of the wreck story, and no farther) with all doubters and undetermined inquirers; but with the very large class of previous *believers*, this disproof of a proof is a mere accident, and cannot be expected to have much logical consequence. Believing that such things may be as this revelation of a wreck, they naturally are less exacting of the stabilities of the proving process. What we think probable we do

[1] One of the visions of Miss Martineau's 'apocalyptic housemaid' related to the wreck of a vessel in which the Tynemouth people were much interested. Unfortunately it appeared that news of the wreck had reached the town shortly before her vision, and that she had been out of doors immediately before submitting to the mesmeric trance.

not call severely for the proof of. Moreover Miss Martineau is not only a believer in the mysteries of mesmerism (and she wrote to me the other day that in Birmingham, where she is, she has present cognisance of *three cases of clairvoyance*), but she is a believer in the personal integrity of her witnesses. She has what she has well called an 'incommunicable confidence.' And this, however incommunicable, is sufficiently comprehensible to all persons who know what personal faith is, to place her 'honour,' I do maintain, high above any suspicion, any charge with the breath of man's lips. I am sure you agree with me, dear Mr. Chorley — ah! it will be a comfort and joy together. Dear Miss Mitford and I often quarrel softly about literary life and its toils and sorrows, she against and I in favour of; but we never could differ about the worth and comfort of domestic affection.

Ever sincerely yours,

Elizabeth B. Barrett.

I am delighted to hear of the novel. And the comedy?

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: April 28, 1845.

Dear Mr. Chorley, — . . . For Miss Martineau, is it not true that she *has* admitted her wreck story to have no proof? Surely she has. Surely she said that the evidence was incapable, at this point of time, of justification to the *exoteric*, and that the question had sunk now to one of character, to which her opponent answered that it had always *been* one of character. And you must admit that the direct and unmitigated manner of depreciating the reputation, not merely of Jane Arrowsmith, but of Mrs. Wynyard, a personal friend of Miss Martineau's to whom she professes great obligations, could not be otherwise than exasperating to a woman of her generous temper, and this just in the

crisis of her gratitude for her restoration to life and enjoyment by the means (as she considers it) of this friend. Not that I feel at all convinced of her having been cured by mesmerism; I have told her openly that I doubt it a little, and she is not angry with me for saying so. Also, the wreck story, and (as you suggest) the three new cases of clairvoyance; why, one *cannot*, you know, give one's specific convictions to general sweeping testimonies, with a mist all round them. Still, I do lean to believing this *class* of mysteries, and I see nothing more incredible in the apocalypse of the wreck and other marvels of clairvoyance, than in that singular adaptation of another person's senses, which is a common phenomenon of the simple forms of mesmerism. If it is credible that a person in a mesmeric sleep can taste the sourness of the vinegar on another person's palate, I am ready to go the whole length of the transmigration of senses. But after all, except from hearing so much, I am as ignorant as you are, in my own experience. One of my sisters was thrown into a sort of swoon, and could not open her eyelids, though she heard what passed, once or twice or thrice; and she might have been a prophetess by this time, perhaps, if, partly from her own feeling on the subject, and partly from mine, she had not determined never to try the experiment again. It is hideous and detestable to my imagination; as I confessed to you, it makes my blood run backwards; and if I were *you*, I would not (with the nervous weakness you speak of) throw myself into the way of it, I really would not. Think of a female friend of mine begging me to give her a lock of my hair, or rather begging my sister to 'get it for her,' that she might send it to a celebrated prophet of mesmerism in Paris, to have an oracle concerning me. Did you ever, since the days of the witches, hear a more ghastly proposition? It shook me so with horror, I had scarcely voice to say 'no,' though I *did* say it very emphatically at last, I assure you.

A lock of my hair for a Parisian prophet? Why, if I

had yielded, I should have felt the steps of pale spirits treading as thick as snow all over my sofa and bed, by day and night, and pulling a corresponding lock of hair on my head at awful intervals. I, who was born with a double set of nerves, which are always out of order; the most excitable person in the world, and nearly the most superstitious. I should have been scarcely sane at the end of a fortnight, I believe of myself! Do you remember the little spirit in gold shoe-buckles, who was a familiar of Heinrich Stilling's? Well, I should have had a French one to match the German, with Balzac's superfine boot-polish in place of the buckles, as surely as I lie here a mortal woman.

I congratulate you (amid all cares and anxieties) upon the view of Naples in the distance, but chiefly on your own happy and just estimate of your selected position in life. It does appear to me wonderfully and mournfully wrong, when men of letters, as it is too much the fashion for them to do, take to dishonoring their profession by fruitless bewailings and gnashings of teeth; when, all the time, it must be their own fault if it is not the noblest in the world. Miss Mitford treats me as a blind witness in this case; because I have seen nothing of the literary world, or any other sort of world, and yet cry against her 'pen and ink' cry. It is the cry I least like to hear from her lips, of all others; and it is unworthy of them altogether. On the lips of a woman of letters, it sounds like jealousy (which it cannot be with *her*), as on the lips of a woman of the world, like ingratitude. Madame Girardin's 'Ecole des Journalistes' deserved Jules Janin's reproof of it; and there is something noble and touching in that feeling of brotherhood among men of letters, which he invokes. I am so glad to hear you say that I am right, glad for your sake and glad for mine. In fact, there is something which is attractive to *me*, and which has been attractive ever since I was as high as this table, even in the old worn type of Grub Street authors and garret poets. Men and women of letters are the first in the

whole world to me, and I would rather be the least among them, than 'dwell in the courts of princes.'

Forgive me for writing so fast and far. Just as if you had nothing to do but to read me. Oh, for patience for the novel.

I am, faithfully yours,

ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.

To Miss Thomson[1]

50 Wimpole Street: Friday, May 16, 1845 [postmark].

I write one line to thank you, dear Miss THOMSON, for *your* translation (so far too liberal, though true to the spirit of my intention) of my work for your album. How could it *not* be a pleasure to me to work for you?

As to my using those manuscripts otherwise than in your service, I do not at all think of it, and I wish to say this. Perhaps I do not (also) partake quite your 'divine fury' for converting our sex into Greek scholarship, and I do not, I confess, think it as desirable as you do. Where there is a love for poetry, and thirst for beauty strong enough to justify labour, let these impulses, which are noble, be obeyed; but in the case of the multitude it is different; and the mere *fashion of scholarship* among women would be a disagreeable vain thing, and worse than vain. You, who are a Greek yourself, know that the Greek language is not to be learnt in a flash of lightning and by Hamiltonian systems, but that it swallows up year after year of studious life. Now I have a 'doxy' (as Warburton called it), that there is no exercise of the mind so little profitable to the mind as the study of languages. It is the nearest thing to a passive recipiency — is it not? — as a mental action, though it leaves one as weary as ennui itself. Women want to be made to

[1] Afterwards Mdme. Emil Braun; see the letter of January 9, 1850. At this time she was engaged in editing an album or anthology, to which she had asked Miss Barrett to contribute some classical translations.

think actively: their apprehension is quicker than that of men, but their defect lies for the most part in the logical faculty and in the higher mental activities. Well, and then, to remember how our own English poets are neglected and scorned; our poets of the Elizabethan age! I would rather that my countrywomen began by loving *these*.

Not that I would blaspheme against Greek poetry, or depreciate the knowledge of the language as an attainment. I congratulate *you* on it, though I never should think of trying to convert other women into a desire for it. Forgive me.

To think of Mr. Burges's comparing my Nonnus to the right Nonnus makes my hair stand on end, and the truth is I had flattered myself that nobody would take such trouble. I have not much reverence for Nonnus, and have pulled him and pushed him and made him stand as I chose, never fearing that my naughty impertinences would be brought to light. For the rest, I thank you gratefully (and may I respectfully and gratefully thank Miss Bayley?) for the kind words of both of you, both in this letter and as my sister heard them. It is delightful to me to find such grace in the eyes of dearest Mr. Kenyon's friends, and I remain, dear Miss Thomson,

Truly yours, and gladly,

E. B. B.

If there should be anything more at any time for me to do, I trust to your trustfulness.

To Miss Thomson

50 Wimpole Street: Monday [1845].

My dear Miss Thomson, — Believe of me that it can only give me pleasure when you are affectionate enough to treat me as a friend; and for the rest, nobody need apologise for taking another into the vineyards — least Miss Bayley and yourself to *me*. At the first thought I felt sure that

there must be a great deal about vines in these Greeks of ours, and am surprised, I confess, in turning from one to another, to find how few passages of length are quotable, and how the images drop down into a line or two. Do you know the passage in the seventh 'Odyssey' where there is a vineyard in different stages of ripeness? — of which Pope has made the most, so I tore up what I began to write, and leave you to him. It is in Alcinous' gardens, and between the first and second hundred lines of the book. The one from the 'Iliad,' open to Miss Bayley's objection, is yet too beautiful and appropriate, I fancy, for you to throw over. Curious it is that my first recollection went from that shield of Achilles to Hesiod's 'Shield of Hercules' from which I send you a version — leaving out of it what dear Miss Bayley would object to on a like ground with the other:

> Some gathered grapes, with reap-hooks in their hands,
> While others bore off from the gathering bands
> Whole baskets-full of bunches, black and white,
> From those great ridges heaped up into sight,
> With vine-leaves and their curling tendrils. So
> They bore the baskets . . .
> . . . Yes! and all were saying
> Their jests, while each went staggering in a row
> Beneath his grape-load to the piper's playing.
> The grapes were purple-ripe. And here, in fine,
> Men trod them out, and there they drained the wine.

In the 'Works and Days' Hesiod says again, what is not worth your listening to, perhaps:

> And when that Sirius and Orion come
> To middle heaven, and when Aurora — she
> O' the rosy fingers — looks inquiringly
> Full on Arcturus, straightway gather home
> The general vintage. And, I charge you, see
> All, in the sun and open air, outlaid
> Ten days and nights, and five days in the shade.
> The sixth day, pour in vases the fine juice —
> The gift of Bacchus, who gives joys for use.

Anacreon talks to the point so well that you must forgive him, I think, for being Anacreontic, and take from his hands what is not defiled. The translation you send me does not 'smell of Anacreon,' nor please me. Where did you get it? Would this be at all fresher?

> Grapes that wear a purple skin,
> Men and maidens carry in,
> Brimming baskets on their shoulders,
> Which they topple one by one
> Down the winepress. Men are holders
> Of the place there, and alone
> Tread the grapes out, crush them down,
> Letting loose the soul of wine —
> Praising Bacchus as divine,
> With the loud songs called his own!

You are aware of the dresser of the vine in Homer's 'Hymn to Mercury' translated so exquisitely by Shelley, and of a very beautiful single figure in Theocritus besides. Neither probably would suit your purpose. In the 'Pax' of Aristophanes there is an idle 'Chorus' who talks of looking at the vines and watching the grapes ripen, and eating them at last, but there is nothing of vineyard work in it, so I dismiss the whole.

For 'Hector and Andromache,' would you like me to try to do it for you? It would amuse me, and you should not be bound to do more with what I send you than to throw it into the fire if it did not meet your wishes precisely. The same observation applies, remember, to this little sheet, which I have *kept* — delayed sending — just because I wanted to let you have a trial of my strength on 'Andromache' in the same envelope; but the truth is that it is not *begun* yet, partly through other occupation, and partly through the lassitude which the cold wind of the last few days always brings down on me. Yesterday I made an effort, and felt like a broken stick — not even a bent one! So wait for a warm day (and what a season

we have had! I have been walking up and down stairs and pretending to be quite well), and I will promise to do my best, and certainly an inferior hand may get nearer to touch the great Greek lion's mane than Pope's did.

Will you give my love to dear Miss Bayley? She shall hear from me — and *you* shall, in a day or two. And do not mind Mr. Kenyon. He 'roars as softly as a sucking dove;' nevertheless he is an intolerant monster, as I half told him the other day.

Believe me, dear Miss Thomson,

Affectionately yours,

E. B. B.

To Mr. Westwood

50 Wimpole Street: May 22, 1845.

Did you persevere with 'Sordello'? I hope so. Be sure that we may all learn (as poets) much and deeply from it, for the writer speaks true oracles. When you have read it through, then read for relaxation and recompense the last 'Bell and Pomegranate' by the same poet, his 'Colombe's Birthday,' which is exquisite. Only 'Pippa Passes' I lean to, or kneel to, with the deepest reverence. Wordsworth has been in town, and is gone. Tennyson is still here. He likes London, I hear, and hates Cheltenham, where he resides with his family, and he smokes pipe after pipe, and does not mean to write any more poems. Are we to sing a requiem?

Believe me, faithfully yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett.

To H. S. Boyd

Saturday, July 21, 1845 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — You are kind to exceeding kindness, and I am as grateful as any of your long-ago kind invitations ever found me. It is something pleasant, indeed,

and like a return to life, to be asked by you to spend two or three days in your house, and I thank you for this pleasantness, and for the goodness, on your own part, which induced it. You may be perfectly sure that no Claypon, though he should live in Arcadia, would be preferred by me to *you* as a host, and I wonder how you could entertain the imagination of such a thing. Mr. Kenyon, indeed, has asked me repeatedly to spend a few hours on a sofa in his house, and, the Regent's Park being so much nearer than you are, I had promised to think of it. But I have not yet found it possible to accomplish even that quarter of a mile's preferment, and my ambition is forced to be patient when I begin to think of St. John's Wood. I am considerably stronger, and increasing in strength, and in time, with a further advance of the summer, I may do 'such things — what they are yet, I know not.' Yes, I *know* that they relate to *you*, and that I have a hope, as well as an earnest, affectionate desire, to sit face to face with you once more before this summer closes. Do, in the meantime, believe that I am very grateful to you for your kind, considerate proposal, and that it is not made in vain for my wishes, and that I am not likely willingly 'to spend two or three days' with anybody in the world before I do so with yourself.

Mr. Hunter has not paid us his usual Saturday's visit, and therefore I have no means of answering the questions you put in relation to him. We will ask him about 'times and seasons' when next we see him, and you shall hear.

Did you ever hear much of Robert Montgomery, commonly called Satan Montgomery because the author of 'Satan,' of the 'Omnipresence of the Deity,' and of various poems which pass through edition after edition, nobody knows how or *why?* I understand that his pew (he is a clergyman) is sown over with red rosebuds from ladies of the congregation, and that the same fair hands have made and presented to him, in the course of a single season, one

hundred pairs of slippers. Whereupon somebody said to this Reverend Satan, 'I never knew before, Mr. Montgomery, that you were a *centipede*.'

Dearest Mr. Boyd's affectionate and grateful

Elibet.

Through the summer of 1845, Miss Barrett, as usual, recovered strength, but so slightly that her doctor urged that she should not face the winter in England. Plans were accordingly made for her going abroad, to which the following letters refer, but the scheme ultimately broke down before the prohibition of Mr. Barrett — a prohibition for which no valid reason was put forward, and which, to say the least, bore the colour of unaccountable indifference to his daughter's health and wishes. The matter is of some importance on account of its bearing on the action taken by Miss Barrett in the autumn of the following year.

To Mrs. Martin

Monday, July 29, 1845 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am ashamed not to have written before, and yet have courage enough to ask you to write to me as soon as you can. Day by day I have had good intentions enough (the fact is) about writing, to seem to deserve some good deeds from you, which is contrary to all wisdom and reason, I know, but is rather natural, after all. What *my* deeds have been, you will be apt to ask. Why, all manner of idleness, which is the most interrupting, you know, of all things. The Hedleys have been flitting backwards and forwards, staying, some of them, for a month at a time in London, and then going, and then coming again; and I have had other visitors, few but engrossing 'after their kind.' And I have been *getting well* — which is a process — going out into the carriage two or three times a

week, abdicating my sofa for my armchair, moving from one room to another now and then, and walking about mine quite as well as, and with considerably more complacency than, a child of two years old. Altogether, I do think that if you were kind enough to be glad to see me looking better when you were in London, you would be kind enough to be still gladder if you saw me now. Everybody praises me, and I look in the looking-glass with a better conscience. Also, it is an improving improvement, and will be, until, you know, the last hem of the garment of summer is lost sight of, and then — and then — I must either follow to another climate, or be ill again — *that* I know, and am prepared for. It is but dreary work, this undoing of my Penelope web in the winter, after the doing of it through the summer, and the more progress one makes in one's web, the more dreary the prospect of the undoing of all these fine silken stitches. But we shall see. . . .

Ever your affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Tuesday [October 1845].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Do believe that I have not been, as I have seemed, perhaps, forgetful of you through this silence. This last proof of your interest and affection for me — in your letter to Henrietta — quite rouses me to *speak out* my remembrance of you, and I have been remembering you all the time that I did not speak, only I was so perplexed and tossed up and down by doubts and sadnesses as to require some shock from without to force the speech from me. Your verses, in their grace of kindness, and the ivy from Wordsworth's cottage, just made me think to myself that I would write to you before I left England, but when you talk really of coming to see me, why, I must speak ! You overcome me with the sense of your goodness to me.

Yet, after all, I will not have you come! The farewells are bad enough which come to us, without our going to seek them, and I would rather wait and meet you on the Continent, or in England again, than see you now, just to part from you. And you cannot guess how shaken I am, and how I cling to every plank of a little calm. Perhaps I am going on the 17th or 20th. Certainly I have made up my mind to do it, and shall do it as a bare matter of duty; and it is one of the most painful acts of duty which my whole life has set before me. The road is as rough as possible, as far as I can see it. At the same time, being absolutely convinced from my own experience and perceptions, and the unhesitating advice of two able medical men (Dr. Chambers, one of them), that to escape the English winter will be *everything for me*, and that it involves the comfort and usefulness of the rest of my life, I have resolved to do it, let the circumstances of the doing be as painful as they may. If you were to see me you would be astonished to see the work of the past summer; but all these improvements will ebb away with the sun — while I am assured of permanent good if I leave England. The struggle with me has been a very painful one; I cannot enter on the how and wherefore at this moment. I had expected more help than I have found, and am left to myself, and thrown so on my own sense of duty as to feel it right, for the sake of future years, to make an effort to stand by myself as I best can. At the same time, I will not tell you that at the last hour something may not happen to keep me at home. *That* is neither impossible nor improbable. If, for instance, I find that I cannot have one of my brothers with me, why, the going in that case would be out of the question. Under ordinary circumstances I shall go, and if the experiment of going fails, why, then I shall have had the satisfaction of having tried it, and of knowing that it is God's will which keeps me a prisoner, and makes me a burden. As it is, I have been told that if I had gone years ago I *should be well now;* that one lung

is very slightly affected, but the nervous system *absolutely shattered*, as the state of the pulse proves. I am in the habit of taking forty drops of laudanum a day, and *cannot do with less*, that is, the medical man *told me* that I could not do with less, saying so with his hand on the pulse. The cold weather, they say, acts on the lungs, and produces the weakness indirectly, whereas the necessary shutting up acts on the *nerves* and prevents them from having a chance of recovering their tone. And thus, without any mortal disease, or any disease of equivalent seriousness, I am thrown out of life, out of the ordinary sphere of its enjoyment and activity, and made a burden to myself and to others. Whereas there is a means of escape from these evils, and God has opened the door of escape, as wide as I see it!

In all ways, for my own *happiness's sake* I do need *a proof* that the evil is irremediable. And this proof (or the counter-proof) I am about to seek in Italy.

Dr. Chambers has advised *Pisa*, and I go in the direct steamer from the Thames to Leghorn. I have good courage, and as far as my own strength goes, sufficient means.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, more than I thought at first of telling you, I have told you. Much beside there is, painful to talk of, but I hope I have determined to do what is right, and that the determination has not been formed ungently, unscrupulously, nor unaffectionately in respect to the feelings of others. I would die for some of those, but there has been affection opposed to affection.

This in confidence, of course. May God bless both of you! Pray for me, dearest Mrs. Martin. Make up your mind to go somewhere soon — shall you not? — before the winter shuts the last window from which you see the sun.

Dr. Chambers said that he would 'answer for it' that the voyage would rather do me good than harm. Let me suffer sea sickness or not, he said, he would answer for its doing me no harm.

I hope to take Arabel with me, and either Storm or Henry. This is my hope.

Gratefully and affectionately I think of all your kindness and interest. May dear Mr. Martin lose nothing in this coming winter! I shall think of you, and not cease to love you. Moreover, you shall hear again from

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To H. S. Boyd

October 27, 1845 [postmark].

My very dear Friend, — It is so long since I wrote that I must write, I must ruffle your thoughts with a little breath from my side. Listen to me, my dear friend. That I have not written has scarcely been my fault, but my misfortune rather, for I have been quite unstrung and overcome by agitation and anxiety, and thought that I should be able to tell you at last of being calmer and happier, but it was all in vain. I do not leave England, my dear friend. It is decided that I remain on in my prison. It was my full intention to go. I considered it to be a clear duty, and I made up my mind to perform it, let the circumstances be ever so painfully like obstacles; but when the moment came it appeared impossible for me to set out alone, and also impossible to take my brother and sister with me without involving them in difficulties and displeasure. Now what I could risk for myself I could not risk for others, and the very kindness with which they desired me not to think of them only made me think of them more, as was natural and just. So Italy is given up, and I fall back into the hands of God, who is merciful, trusting Him with the time that shall be.

Arabel would have gone to tell you all this a fortnight since, but one of my brothers has been ill with fever which was not exactly typhus, but of the typhoid character, and we knew that you would rather not see her under the circum-

stances. He is very much better (it is Octavius), and has been out of bed to-day and yesterday.

Do not reproach me either for not writing or for not going, my very dear friend. I have been too heavy-hearted for words; and as to the deeds, you would not have wished me to lead others into difficulties, the extent and result of which no one could calculate. It would not have been just of me.

And *you*, how are you, and what are you doing?

May God bless you, my dear dear friend!

Ever yours I am, affectionately and gratefully,

E. B. B.

To Mr. Chorley

50 Wimpole Street: November 1845.

I must trouble you with another letter of thanks, dear Mr. Chorley, now that I have to thank you for the value of the work as well as the kindness of the gift, for I have read your three volumes of 'Pomfret'[1] with interest and moral assent, and with great pleasure in various ways: it is a pure, true book without effort, which, in these days of gesture and rolling of the eyes, is an uncommon thing. Also you make your 'private judgment' work itself out quietly as a simple part of the love of truth, instead of being the loud heroic virtue it is so apt in real life to profess itself, seldom moving without drums and trumpets and the flying of party colours. All these you have put down rightly, wisely, and boldly, and it was, in my mind, no less wise than bold of you to let in that odour of Tyrrwhitism into the folds of the purple, and so prevent the very possibility of any 'prestige.' If I complained it might be that your 'private judgment' confines its reference to 'public opinion,' and shuns, too proudly perhaps, the higher and deeper relations

[1] A novel by Mr. Chorley, a copy of which he had presented to Miss Barrett.

of human responsibility. But there are difficulties, I see, and you choose your path advisedly, of course. The best character in the book I take to be *Rose;* I cannot hesitate in selecting him. He is so lifelike with the world's conventional life that you hear his footsteps when he walks, and, indeed, I think his boots were apt to creak just the *soupçon* of a creak, just as a gentleman's boots might, and he is excellently consistent, even down to the choice of a wife whom he could patronise. I hope you like your own Mr. Rose, and that you will forgive me for jilting Grace for Helena, which I could not help any more than Walter could. But now, may I venture to ask a question? Would it not have been wise of you if, on the point of *reserve*, you had thrown a deeper shade of opposition into the characters or rather manners of these women? Helena sits like a statue (and could Grace have done more?) when she wins Walter's heart in Italy. Afterwards, and by fits at the time, indeed, the artist fire bursts from her, but there was a great deal of smouldering when there should have been a clear heat to justify Walter's change of feeling. And then, in respect to *that*, do you really think that your Grace was generous, heroic (with the evidence she had of the change) in giving up her engagement? For her own sake, could she have done otherwise? I fancy not; the position seems surrounded by its own necessities, and no room for a doubt. I write on my own doubts, you see, and you will smile at them, or understand all through them that if the book had not interested me like a piece of real life, I should not find myself *backbiting* as if all these were 'my neighbours.' The pure tender feeling of the closing scenes touched me to better purpose, believe me, and I applaud from my heart and conscience your rejection of that low creed of 'poetical justice' which is neither justice nor poetry, which is as degrading to virtue as false to experience, and which, thrown from your book, raises it into a pure atmosphere at once.

I could go on talking, but remind myself (I do hope in time) that I might show my gratitude better. With sincere wishes for the success of the work (for just see how practically we come to trust to poetical justices after all our theories — *I*, I mean, and *mine!*), and with respect and esteem for the writer,

I remain very truly yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett.

To Mrs Jameson

50 Wimpole Street: December 1, 1845.

My dear Mrs. Jameson, — I receive your letter, as I must do every sign of your being near and inclined to think of me in kindness, gladly, and assure you at once that whenever you can spend a half-hour on me you will find me enough myself to have a true pleasure in welcoming you, say any day except next Saturday or the Monday immediately following.

As soon as I heard of your return to England I ventured to hope that some good might come of it to me in my room here, besides the general good, which I look for with the rest of the public, when the censer swings back into the midst of us again. And how good of you, dear Mrs. Jameson, to think of me there where the perfumes were set burning; it makes me glad and grand that you should have been able to do so. Also the kind wishes which came with the thoughts (you say) were not in vain, for I have been very idle and very *well;* the angel of the summer has done more for me even than usual, and till the last wave of his wing I took myself to be quite well and at liberty, and even now I am as well as anyone can be who has heard the prison door shut for a whole winter at least, and knows it to be the only English alternative of a grave. Which is a gloomy way of saying that I am well but forced to shut myself up with disagreeable precautions all round, and I

ought to be gratified instead of gloomy. Believe me that I *shall* be so when you come to see me, remaining in the meanwhile

Most truly yours,
ELIZABETH BARRETT.

To Mrs. Martin

Friday [about December 1845].

I am the guilty person, dearest Mrs. Martin! You would have heard from Henrietta at least yesterday, only I persisted in promising to write instead of her; and so, if there are reproaches, let them fall. Not that I am audacious and without shame! But I have grown familiar with an evil conscience as to these matters of not writing when I ought; and long ago I grew familiar with your mercy and power of pardoning; and then — and then — if silence and sulkiness are proved crimes of mine to ever such an extreme, why it would not be unnatural. Do you think I was born to live the life of an oyster, such as I *do* live here? And so, the moaning and gnashing of teeth are best done alone and without taking anyone into confidence. And so, this is all I have to say for myself, which perhaps you will be glad of; for you will be ready to agree with me that next to such faults of idleness, negligence, silence (call them by what names you please!) as I have been guilty of, is the repentance of them, if indeed the latter be not the most unpardonable of the two.

And what are you doing so late in Herefordshire? Is dear Mr. Martin too well, and tempting the demons? I do hope that the next news of you will be of your being about to approach the sun and visit us on the road. You do not give your wisdom away to your friends, all of it, I hope and trust — not even to Reynolds.

Tell Mr. Martin that a new great daily newspaper, professing '*ultraism*' at the right end (meaning his and mine),

is making 'mighty preparation,' to be called the 'Daily News,'[1] to be edited by Dickens and to combine with the most liberal politics such literature as gives character to the French journals — the objects being both to help the people and to give a *status* to men of letters, socially and politically — great objects which will not be attained, I fear, by any such means. In the first place I have misgivings as to Dickens. He has not, I think, *breadth* of mind enough for such work, with all his gifts; but we shall see. An immense capital has been offered and actually advanced. Be good patriots and order the paper. And talking of papers, I hope you read in the 'Morning Chronicle' Landor's verses to my friend and England's poet, Mr. Browning.[2] They have much beauty.

You know that Occy has been ill, and that he is well? I hope you are not so behindhand in our news as not to know. For me, I am not yet undone by the winter. I still sit in my chair and walk about the room. But the prison doors are shut close, and I could dash myself against them sometimes with a passionate impatience of the needless captivity. I feel so intimately and from evidence, how, with air and warmth together in any fair proportion, I should be as well and happy as the rest of the world, that it is intolerable — well, it is better to sympathise quietly with Lady —— and other energetic runaways, than amuse you with being riotous to no end; and it is *best* to write one's own epitaph still more quietly, is it not? . . .

And oh how lightly I write, and then sigh to think of what different colours my spirits and my paper are. Do you know what it is to laugh, that you may not cry? Yet I hold a comfort fast. . . . Your very affectionate

BA.

[1] The first number of the *Daily News* appeared on January 21, 1846, under the editorship of Charles Dickens.

[2] The well-known lines beginning, 'There is delight in singing.' They appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* for November 22, 1845.

To Mrs. Martin

Saturday [February–March 1846].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Indeed it has been tantalising and provoking to have you close by without being able to gather a better advantage from it than the knowledge that you were suffering. So passes the world and the glory of it. I have been vexed into a high state of morality, I assure you. Now that you are gone away I hear from you again: and it does seem to me that almost always it happens so, and that you come to London to be ill and leave it before you can be well again. It is a comfort in every case to know of your being better, and Hastings is warm and quiet, and the pretty country all round (mind you go and see the 'Rocks' *par excellence!*) will entice you into very gentle exercise. At the same time, don't wish me into the house you speak of. I can lose nothing here, shut up in my prison, and the nightingales come to my windows and sing through the sooty panes. If I were at Hastings I should risk the chance of recovering liberty, and the consolations of slavery would not reach me as they do here. Also, if I were to set my heart upon Hastings, I might break it at leisure; there would be exactly as much difficulty in turning my face that way as towards Italy — ah, you do not understand! And *I do, at last*, I am sorry to say; and it has been very long, tedious and reluctant work, the learning of the lesson. . . .

Did Henrietta tell you that I heard at last from Miss Martineau, who thought me in Italy, she said, and therefore was silent? She has sent me her new work (have you read it?) and speaks of her strength and of being able to walk fifteen miles a day, which seems to me like a fairy tale, or the 'Three-leagued Boots' at least.

What am I doing, to tell you of? Nothing! The winter is kind, and this divine 'muggy' weather (is *that* the technical word and spelling thereof?), which gives all reason-

able people colds in their heads, leaves *me* the hope of getting back to the summer without much injury. A friend of mine — one of the greatest poets in England too — brought me primroses and polyanthuses the other day, as they are grown in Surrey![1] Surely it must be nearer spring than we think.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, write and say how you are. And say, God bless you, both the yous, and mention Mr. Martin particularly, and what your plans are.

Ever your affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Tuesday [end of June 1846].

So, my dearest Mrs. Martin, you are quite angry with all of us and with me chiefly. Oh, you need not say no! I see it, I understand it, and shall therefore take up my own cause precisely as if I were an injured person. In the first place, dearest Mrs. Martin, when you wrote to me (at last!) to say that we were both guilty correspondents, you should have spoken in the singular number; for I was not guilty at all, I beg to say, while you were on the Continent. You were uncertain, you said, on going, where you should go and how long you should stay, and you promised to write and give me some sort of address — a promise never kept — and where was I to write to you? I heard for the first time, from the Peytons, of your being at Pau, and then you were expected at home. So innocent I am, and because it is a pleasure rather rare to make a sincere profession of innocence, I meant to write to you at least ten days ago;

[1] Beloved, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through,
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
Sonnets from the Portuguese, xliv.

and then (believe me you will, without difficulty) the dreadful death of poor Mr. Haydon,[1] the artist, quite upset me, and made me disinclined to write a word beyond necessary ones. I thank God that I never saw him — poor gifted Haydon — but, a year and a half ago, we had a correspondence which lasted through several months and was very pleasant while it lasted. Then it was dropped, and only a few days before the event he wrote three or four notes to me to ask me to take charge of some papers and pictures, which I acceded to as once I had done before. He was constantly in pecuniary difficulty, and in apprehension of the seizure of goods; and nothing of *fear* suggested itself to my mind — nothing. The shock was very great. Oh! I do not write to you to write of this. Only I would have you understand the real case, and that it is not an excuse, and that it was natural for me to be shaken a good deal. No artist is left behind with equal largeness of poetical conception! If the hand had always obeyed the soul, he would have been a genius of the first order. As it is, he lived on the *slope* of greatness and could not be steadfast and calm. His life was one long agony of self-assertion. Poor, poor Haydon! See how the world treats those who try too openly for its gratitude! 'Tom Thumb for ever' over the heads of the giants.

So you heard that I was quite well? Don't believe everything you hear. But I am really in *a way* to be well, if I could have such sunshine as we have been burning in lately, and a fair field of peace besides. Generally, I am able to go out every day, either walking or in the carriage — '*walking*' means as far as Queen Anne's Street. The wonderful winter did not cast me down, and the hot summer

[1] He committed suicide on June 22, under the influence of the disappointment caused by the indifference of the public to his pictures, the final instance of which was its flocking to see General Tom Thumb and neglecting Haydon's large pictures of 'Aristides' and 'Nero,' which were being exhibited in an adjoining room of the Egyptian Hall.

helps me up higher. Now, to *keep in the sun* is the problem to solve; and if I can do it, I shall be 'as well as anybody.' If I can't, as ill as ever. Which is the *résumé* of me, without a word more.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To H. S. Boyd

June 27, 1846 [postmark].

Dearest Mr. Boyd, — Let me be clear of your reproaches for not going to you this week. The truth is that I have been so much shocked and shaken by the dreadful suicide of poor Mr. Haydon, the artist, I had not spirits for it. He was not personally my friend. I never saw him face to face. But we had corresponded, and one of his last acts was an act of *trust* towards me. Also I admired his genius. And all to end *so!* It has naturally affected me much.

So I could not come, but in a few days I *will* come; and in the meantime, I have had the sound of your voice to think of, more than I could think of the deep melodious bells, though they made the right and solemn impression. How I felt, to be under your roof again!

May God bless you, my very dear friend.

These words in the greatest haste.

From your ever affectionate

Elibet.

CHAPTER V

1846–1849

It is now time to tell the story of the romance which, during the last eighteen months, had entered into Elizabeth Barrett's life, and was destined to divert its course into new and happier channels. It is a story which fills one of the brightest pages in English literary history.

The foregoing letters have shown something of Miss Barrett's admiration for the poetry of Robert Browning, and contain allusions to the beginning of their personal acquaintance. Her knowledge of his poetry dates back to the appearance of 'Paracelsus,' not to 'Pauline,' of which there is no mention in her letters, and which had been practically withdrawn from circulation by the author. Her personal acquaintance with him was of much later date, and was directly due to the publication of the 'Poems' in 1844. Chancing to express his admiration of them to Mr. Kenyon, who had been his friend since 1839 and his father's schoolfellow in years long distant, Mr. Browning was urged by him to write to Miss Barrett himself, and tell her of his pleasure in her work. Possibly the allusion to him in 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' may have been felt as furnishing an excuse for addressing her; however that may be, he took Mr. Kenyon's advice, and in January 1845 we find Miss Barrett in 'ecstasies' over a letter (evidently the first) from 'Browning the poet, Browning the author of "Paracelsus" and king of the mystics' (see p. 236, above).

The correspondence, once begun, continued to flourish,

and in the course of the same month Miss Barrett tells Mrs. Martin that she is 'getting deeper and deeper into correspondence with Robert Browning, poet and mystic; and we are growing to be the truest of friends.' At the end of May, when the return of summer brought her a renewal of strength, they met face to face for the first time; and from that time Robert Browning was included in a small list of privileged friends who were admitted to visit her in person.

How this friendship ripened into love, and love into courtship, it is not for us to inquire too closely. Something has been told already in Mrs. Orr's 'Life of Robert Browning;' something more is told in the long and most interesting letter which stands first in the present chapter. More precious than either is the record of her fluctuating feelings which Mrs. Browning has enshrined for ever in her 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' and in the handful of other poems — 'Life and Love,' 'A Denial,' 'Proof and Disproof,' 'Inclusions,' 'Insufficiency,'[1] which likewise belong to this period and describe its hesitations, its sorrows and its overwhelming joys. In the difficult circumstances under which they were placed, the conduct of both was without reproach. Mr. Browning knew that he was asking to be allowed to take charge of an invalid's life — believed indeed that she was even worse than was really the case, and that she was hopelessly incapacitated from ever standing on her feet — but was sure enough of his love to regard that as no obstacle. Miss Barrett, for her part, shrank from burdening the life of the man she loved with a responsibility so trying and perhaps so painful, and refused his unchanging devotion for his sake, not for her own.

The situation was complicated by the character of Mr. Barrett, and by the certainty — for such it was to his daughter — that he would refuse to entertain the idea of her marriage, or, indeed, that of any of his children. The truth of this view was absolutely vindicated not only in the case

[1] *Poetical Works*, iv. 20–32.

of Elizabeth, but also in those of two others of the family in later years. The reasons for his feeling it is probable he could not have explained to himself. He was fond of his family after his own fashion — proud, too, of his daughter's genius; but he could not, it would seem, regard them in any other light than as belonging to himself. The wish to leave his roof and to enter into new relations was looked upon as unfilial treachery; and no argument or persuasion could shake him from his fixed idea. So long as this disposition could be regarded as the result of a devoted love of his children, it could be accepted with respect, if not with full acquiescence; but circumstances brought the proof that this was not the case, and thereby ultimately paved the way to Elizabeth's marriage.

These circumstances are stated in several of her letters, and alluded to in several others, but it may help to the understanding of them if a brief summary be given here. In the autumn of 1845, as described above, Miss Barrett's doctors advised her to winter abroad. The advice was strongly pressed, as offering a good prospect of a real improvement of health, and as the only way of avoiding the annual relapse brought on by the English winter. One or more of her brothers could have gone with her, and she was willing and able to try the experiment; but in face of this express medical testimony, Mr. Barrett interposed a refusal. This indifference to her health naturally wounded Miss Barrett very deeply; but it also gave her the right of taking her fate into her own hands. Convinced at last that no refusal on her part could alter Mr. Browning's devotion to her, and that marriage with him, so far from being an increase of risk to her health, offered the only means by which she might hope for an improvement in it, she gave him the conditional promise that if she came safely through the then impending winter, she would consent to a definite engagement.

The winter of 1845–6 was an exceptionally mild one,

and she suffered less than usual; and in the spring of 1846 her lover claimed her promise. Throughout the summer she continued to gain strength, being able, not only to drive out, but even to walk short distances, and to visit a few of her special friends such as Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Boyd. Accordingly it was agreed that at the end of the summer they should be married, and leave England for Italy before the cold weather should return. The uselessness of asking her father's consent was so evident, and the certainty that it would only result in the exclusion of Mr. Browning from the house so clear, that no attempt was made to obtain it. Only her two sisters were aware of what was going on; but even they were not informed of the final arrangements for the marriage, in order that they might not be involved in their father's anger when it should become known. For the same reason the secret was kept from so close a friend of both parties as Mr. Kenyon; though both he and Mr. Boyd, and possibly also Mrs. Jameson, had suspicions amounting to different degrees of certainty as to the real state of affairs. It had been intended that they should wait until the end of September, but a project for a temporary removal of the family into the country precipitated matters; and on September 12, accompanied only by her maid, Wilson, Miss Barrett slipped from the house and was married to Robert Browning in Marylebone Church.[1] The associations which that ponderous edifice has gained from this act for all lovers of English poetry tempt one to forgive its unromantic appearance, and to remember rather the pilgrimages which Robert Browning on his subsequent visits to England never failed to pay to its threshold.

For a week after the marriage Mrs. Browning — by which more familiar name we now have the right to call her —

[1] Mrs. Sutherland Orr says that the marriage took place in St. Pancras Church; but this is a mistake, as the parish register of St. Marylebone proves.

remained in her father's house; her husband refraining from seeing her, since he could not now ask for her by her proper name without betraying their secret. Then, on September 19, accompanied once more by her maid and the ever-beloved Flushie, she left her home, to which she was never to return, crossed the Channel with her husband to Havre, and so travelled on to Paris. Her father's anger, if not loud, was deep and unforgiving. From that moment he cast her off and disowned her. He would not read or open her letters; he would not see her when she returned to England. Even the birth of her child brought no relenting; he expressed no sympathy or anxiety, he would not look upon its face. He died as he lived, unrelenting, cut off by his own unbending anger from a daughter who could with difficulty bring herself to speak a harsh word of him, even to her most intimate friends.

It was more unexpected and consequently an even more bitter blow to find that her brothers at first disapproved of her action; the more so, since they had sympathised with her in the struggle of the previous autumn. This disapprobation was, however, less deep-seated, resting partly upon doubts as to the practical prudence of the match, partly, no doubt, upon a natural annoyance at having been kept in the dark. Such an estrangement could only be temporary, and as time went on was replaced by a full renewal of the old affection towards herself and a friendly acceptance of her husband. With her sisters, on the other hand, there was never a shadow of difference or estrangement. That love remained unaffected; and almost the only circumstance that caused Mrs. Browning to regret her enforced absence from England was the separation which it entailed from her two sisters.

In Paris the fugitives found a friend who proved a friend indeed. A few weeks earlier Mrs. Jameson, knowing of the needs of Miss Barrett's health, had offered to take her to Italy; but her offer had been refused. Her astonish-

ment may be imagined when, after this short interval of time, she found her invalid friend in Paris as the wife of Robert Browning. The prospect filled her with almost as much dismay as pleasure. 'I have here,' she wrote to a friend from Paris, 'a poet and a poetess — two celebrities who have run away and married under circumstances peculiarly interesting, and such as to render imprudence the height of prudence. Both excellent; but God help them! for I know not how the two poet heads and poet hearts will get on through this prosaic world.'[1] Mrs. Jameson, who was travelling with her young niece, Miss Gerardine Bate,[2] lent her aid to smooth the path of her poet friends, and it was in her company that, after a week's rest in Paris, the Brownings proceeded on their journey to Italy. It is easy to imagine what a comfort her presence must have been to the invalid wife and her naturally anxious husband; and this journey sealed a friendship of no ordinary depth and warmth. Mrs. Browning bore the journey wonderfully, though suffering much from fatigue. During a rest of two days at Avignon, a pilgrimage was made to Vaucluse, in honour of Petrarch and his Laura; and there, as Mrs. Macpherson has recorded in an often quoted passage of her biography of her aunt, 'there, at the very source of the "chiare, fresche e dolci acque," Mr. Browning took his wife up in his arms, and carrying her across the shallow, curling water, seated her on a rock that rose throne-like in the middle of the stream. Thus love and poetry took a new possession of the spot immortalised by Petrarch's loving fancy.'[3]

So at the beginning of October the party reached Pisa; and there the newly wedded pair settled for the winter. Here first since the departure from London was there leisure to renew the intercourse with friends at home,

[1] *Memoirs of Anna Jameson*, by G. Macpherson, p. 218.
[2] Afterwards Mrs. Macpherson, and Mrs. Jameson's biographer.
[3] *Memoirs*, p. 231.

to answer congratulations and good wishes, to explain what might seem strange and unaccountable. From this point Mrs. Browning's correspondence contains nearly a full record of her life, and can be left to tell its own story in better language than the biographer's. The first letter to Mrs. Martin is an 'apologia pro connubio suo' in fullest detail; the others carry on the story from the point at which that leaves it.

With regard to this first letter, full as it is of the most intimate personal and family revelations, it has seemed right to give it entire. The marriage of Robert and Elizabeth Browning has passed into literary history, and it is only fair that it should be set, once for all, in its true light. Those who might be pained by any expressions in it have passed away; and those in whose character and reputation the lovers of English literature are interested have nothing to fear from the fullest revelation. If anything were kept back, false and injurious surmises might be formed; the truth leaves little room for controversy, and none for slander.

To Mrs. Martin

Collegio Ferdinando, Pisa: October 20 (?), 1846.[1]

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Will you believe that I began a letter to you before I took this step, to give you the whole story of the impulses towards it, feeling strongly that I owed what I considered my justification to such dear friends as yourself and Mr. Martin, that you might not hastily conclude that you had thrown away upon one who was quite unworthy the regard of years? I had begun such a letter

[1] The date at the head of the letter is October 2, but that is certainly a slip of the pen, since at that date, as the following letter to Miss Mitford shows, they had not reached Pisa. See also the reference to 'six weeks of marriage' on p. 295. The Pisa postmark appears to be October 20 (or later), and the English postmark is November 5.

— when, by the plan of going to Little Bookham, my plans were all hurried forward — changed — driven prematurely into action, and the last hours of agitation and deep anguish — for it was the deepest of its kind, to leave Wimpole Street and those whom I tenderly loved — *so* would not admit of my writing or thinking: only I was able to think that my beloved sisters would send you some account of me when I was gone. And now I hear from them that your generosity has not waited for a letter from me to do its best for me, and that instead of being vexed, as you might well be, at my leaving England without a word sent to you, you have used kind offices in my behalf, you have been more than the generous and affectionate friend I always considered you. So my first words must be that I am deeply grateful to you, my very dear friend, and that to the last moment of my life I shall remember the claim you have on my gratitude. Generous people are inclined to acquit generously; but it has been very painful to me to observe that with all my mere friends I have found more sympathy and *trust*, than in those who are of my own household and who have been daily witnesses of my life. I do not say this for papa, who is peculiar and in a peculiar position; but it pained me that ——, who *knew* all that passed last year — for instance, about Pisa — who knew that the alternative of making a single effort to secure my health during the winter was the severe displeasure I have incurred now, and that the fruit of yielding myself a prisoner was the sense of being of no use nor comfort to any soul, papa having given up coming to see me except for five minutes a day; ——, who said to me with his own lips, 'He does not love you — do not think it' (said and repeated it two months ago) — that —— should now turn round and reproach me for want of affection towards my family, for not letting myself drop like a dead weight into the abyss, a sacrifice without an object and expiation — this did surprise me and pain me — pained me more than all papa's dreadful words.

But the personal feeling is nearer with most of us than the tenderest feeling for another; and my family had been so accustomed to the idea of my living on and on in that room, that while my heart was eating itself, their love for me was consoled, and at last the evil grew scarcely perceptible. It was no want of love in them, and quite natural in itself: we all get used to the thought of a tomb; and I was buried, that was the whole. It was a little thing even for myself a short time ago, and really it would be a pneumatological curiosity if I could describe and let you see how perfectly for years together, after what broke my heart at Torquay, I lived on the outside of my own life, blindly and darkly from day to day, as completely dead to hope of any kind as if I had my face against a grave, never feeling a personal instinct, taking trains of thought to carry out as an occupation absolutely indifferent to the *me* which is in every human being. Nobody quite understood this of me, because I am not morally a coward, and have a hatred of all the forms of audible groaning. But God knows what is within, and how utterly I had abdicated myself and thought it not worth while to put out my finger to touch my share of life. Even my poetry, which suddenly grew an interest, was a thing on the outside of me, a thing to be done, and then done! What people said of it did not touch *me*. A thoroughly morbid and desolate state it was, which I look back now to with the sort of horror with which one would look to one's graveclothes, if one had been clothed in them by mistake during a trance.

And now I will tell you. It is nearly two years ago since I have known Mr. Browning. Mr. Kenyon wished to bring him to see me five years ago, as one of the lions of London who roared the gentlest and was best worth my knowing; but I refused then, in my blind dislike to seeing strangers. Immediately, however, after the publication of my last volumes, he wrote to me, and we had a correspondence which ended in my agreeing to receive him as I never had

received any other man. I did not know why, but it was utterly impossible for me to refuse to receive him, though I consented against my will. He writes the most exquisite letters possible, and has a way of putting things which I have not, a way of putting aside — so he came. He came, and with our personal acquaintance began his attachment for me, a sort of *infatuation* call it, which resisted the various denials which were my plain duty at the beginning, and has persisted past them all. I began with a grave assurance that I was in an exceptional position and saw him just in consequence of it, and that if ever he recurred to that subject again I never could see him again while I lived; and he believed me and was silent. To my mind, indeed, it was a bare impulse — a generous man of quick sympathies taking up a sudden interest with both hands! So I thought; but in the meantime the letters and the visits rained down more and more, and in every one there was something which was too slight to analyse and notice, but too decided not to be understood; so that at last, when the 'proposed respect' of the silence gave way, it was rather less dangerous. So then I showed him how he was throwing into the ashes his best affections — how the common gifts of youth and cheerfulness were behind me — how I had not strength, even of *heart*, for the ordinary duties of life — everything I told him and showed him. 'Look at this — and this — and this,' throwing down all my disadvantages. To which he did not answer by a single compliment, but simply that he had not then to choose, and that I might be right or he might be right, he was not there to decide; but that he loved me and should to his last hour. He said that the freshness of youth had passed with him also, and that he had studied the world out of books and seen many women, yet had never loved one until he had seen me. That he knew himself, and knew that, if ever so repulsed, he should love me to his last hour — it should be first and last. At the same time,

he would not tease me, he would wait twenty years if I pleased, and then, if life lasted so long for both of us, then when it was ending perhaps, I might understand him and feel that I might have trusted him. For my health, he had believed when he first spoke that I was suffering from an incurable injury of the spine, and that he never could hope to see me stand up before his face, and he appealed to my womanly sense of what a pure attachment should be — whether such a circumstance, if it had been true, was inconsistent with it. He preferred, he said, of free and deliberate choice, to be allowed to sit only an hour a day by my side, to the fulfilment of the brightest dream which should exclude me, in any possible world.

I tell you so much, my ever dear friend, that you may see the manner of man I have had to do with, and the sort of attachment which for nearly two years has been drawing and winning me. I know better than any in the world, indeed, what Mr. Kenyon once unconsciously said before me — that 'Robert Browning is great in everything.' Then, when you think how this element of an affection so pure and persistent, cast into my dreary life, must have acted on it — how little by little I was drawn into the persuasion that something was left, and that still I could do something to the happiness of another — and he what he was, for I have deprived myself of the privilege of praising him — then it seemed worth while to take up with that unusual energy (for me!), expended in vain last year, the advice of the physicians that I should go to a warm climate for the winter. Then came the Pisa conflict of last year. For years I had looked with a sort of indifferent expectation towards Italy, knowing and feeling that I should escape there the annual relapse, yet, with that *laisser aller* manner which had become a habit to me, unable to form a definite wish about it. But last year, when all this happened to me, and I was better than usual in the summer, I *wished* to make the experiment — to live the experiment out, and see whether there was

hope for me or not hope. Then came Dr. Chambers, with his encouraging opinion. 'I wanted simply a warm climate and *air*,' he said; 'I might be well if I pleased.' Followed what you know — or do not precisely know — the pain of it was acutely felt by me; for I never had doubted but that papa would catch at any human chance of restoring my health. I was under the delusion always that the difficulty of making such trials lay in *me*, and not in *him*. His manner of acting towards me last summer was one of the most painful griefs of my life, because it involved a disappointment in the affections. My dear father is a very peculiar person. He is naturally stern, and has exaggerated notions of authority, but these things go with high and noble qualities; and as for feeling, the water is under the rock, and I had faith. Yes, and have it. I admire such qualities as he has — fortitude, integrity. I loved him for his courage in adverse circumstances which were yet felt by him more literally than I could feel them. Always he has had the greatest power over my heart, because I am of those weak women who reverence strong men. By a word he might have bound me to him hand and foot. Never has he spoken a gentle word to me or looked a kind look which has not made in me large results of gratitude, and throughout my illness the sound of his step on the stairs has had the power of quickening my pulse — I have loved him so and love him. Now if he had said last summer that he was reluctant for me to leave him — if he had even allowed me to think *by mistake* that his affection for me was the motive of such reluctance — I was ready to give up Pisa in a moment, and I told him as much. Whatever my new impulses towards life were, my love for him (taken so) would have resisted all — I loved him so dearly. But his course was otherwise, quite otherwise, and I was wounded to the bottom of my heart — cast off when I was ready to cling to him. In the meanwhile, at my side was another; I was driven and I was drawn. Then at last I said, 'If

you like to let this winter decide it, you may. I will allow of no promises nor engagement. I cannot go to Italy, and I know, as nearly as a human creature can know any fact, that I shall be ill again through the influence of this English winter. If I am, you will see plainer the foolishness of this persistence; if I am not, I will do what you please.' And his answer was, 'If you are ill and keep your resolution of not marrying me under those circumstances, I will keep mine and love you till God shall take us both.' This was in last autumn, and the winter came with its miraculous mildness, as you know, and I was saved as I dared not hope; my word therefore was claimed in the spring. Now do you understand, and will you feel for me? An application to my father was certainly the obvious course, if it had not been for his peculiar nature and my peculiar position. But there is no speculation in the case: it is a matter of *knowledge* that if Robert had applied to him in the first instance he would have been forbidden the house without a moment's scruple: and if in the last (as my sisters thought best as a respectable *form*), I should have been incapacitated from any after-exertion by the horrible scenes to which, as a thing of course, I should have been exposed. Papa will not bear some subjects, it is a thing *known;* his peculiarity takes that ground to the largest. Not one of his children will ever marry without a breach, which we all know, though he probably does not — deceiving himself in a setting up of *obstacles*, whereas the real obstacle is in his own mind. In my case there was, or would have been, a great deal of apparent reason to hold by; my health would have been motive enough — ostensible motive. I see that precisely as others may see it. Indeed, if I were charged now with want of generosity for casting myself so, a dead burden, on the man I love, nothing of the sort could surprise me. It was what occurred to myself, that thought was, and what occasioned a long struggle and months of agitation, and which nothing could have over-

come but the very uncommon affection of a very uncommon person, reasoning out to me the great fact of love making its own level. As to vanity and selfishness blinding me, certainly I may have made a mistake, and the future may prove it, but still more certainly I was not blinded *so*. On the contrary, never have I been more humbled, and never less in danger of considering any personal pitiful advantage, than throughout this affair. You, who are generous and a woman, will believe this of me, even if you do not comprehend the *habit* I had fallen into of casting aside the consideration of possible happiness of my own. But I was speaking of papa. Obvious it was that the application to him was a mere form. I knew the result of it. I had made up my mind to act upon my full right of taking my own way. I had long believed such an act (the most strictly personal act of one's life) to be within the rights of every person of mature age, man or woman, and I had resolved to exercise that right in my own case by a resolution which had slowly ripened. All the other doors of life were shut to me, and shut me in as in a prison, and only before this door stood one whom I loved best and who loved me best, and who invited me out through it for the good's sake which he thought I could do him. Now if for the sake of the mere form I had applied to my father, and if, as he would have done directly, he had set up his 'curse' against the step I proposed to take, would it have been doing otherwise than placing a knife in his hand? A few years ago, merely through the reverberation of what he said to another on a subject like this, I fell on the floor in a fainting fit, and was almost delirious afterwards. I cannot bear some words. I would much rather have blows without them. In my actual state of nerves and physical weakness, it would have been the sacrifice of my whole life — of my convictions, of my affections, and, above all, of what the person dearest to me persisted in calling *his* life, and the good of it — if I had observed that

'form.' Therefore, wrong or right, I determined not to observe it, and, wrong or right, I did and do consider that in not doing so I sinned against no duty. That I was *constrained* to act clandestinely, and did not *choose* to do so, God is witness, and will set it down as my heavy misfortune and not my fault. Also, up to the very last act we stood in the light of day for the whole world, if it pleased, to judge us. I never saw him out of the Wimpole Street house; he came twice a week to see me — or rather, three times in the fortnight, openly in the sight of all, and this for nearly two years, and neither more nor less. Some jests used to be passed upon us by my brothers, and I allowed them without a word, but it would have been infamous in me to have taken any into my confidence who would have suffered, as a direct consequence, a blighting of his own prospects. My secrecy towards them all was my simple duty towards them all, and what they call want of affection was an affectionate consideration for them. My sisters did indeed know the truth to a certain point. They knew of the attachment and engagement — I could not help that — but the whole of the event I kept from them with a strength and resolution which really I did not know to be in me, and of which nothing but a sense of the injury to be done to them by a fuller confidence, and my tender gratitude and attachment to them for all their love and goodness, could have rendered me capable. Their faith in me, and undeviating affection for me, I shall be grateful for to the end of my existence, and to the extent of my power of feeling gratitude. My dearest sisters! — especially, let me say, my own beloved Arabel, who, with no consolation except the exercise of a most generous tenderness, has looked only to what she considered my good — never doubting me, never swerving for one instant in her love for me. May God reward her as I cannot. Dearest Henrietta loves me too, but loses less in me, and has reasons for not misjudging me. But both my sisters have been faultless in their bearing

towards me, and never did I love them so tenderly as I love them now.

The only time I met R. B. clandestinely was in the parish church, where we were married before two witnesses — it was the first and only time. I looked, he says, more dead than alive, and can well believe it, for I all but fainted on the way, and had to stop for sal volatile at a chemist's shop. The support through it all was *my trust in him*, for no woman who ever committed a like act of trust has had stronger motives to hold by. Now may I not tell you that his genius, and all but miraculous attainments, are the least things in him, the moral nature being of the very noblest, as all who ever knew him admit? Then he has had that wide experience of men which ends by throwing the mind back on itself and God; there is nothing incomplete in him, except as all humanity is incompleteness. The only wonder is how such a man, whom any woman could have loved, should have loved *me;* but men of genius, you know, are apt to love with their imagination. Then there is something in the sympathy, the strange straight sympathy which unites us on all subjects. If it were not that I look up to him, we should be too alike to be together perhaps, but I know my place better than he does, who is too humble. Oh, you cannot think how well we get on after six weeks of marriage. If I suffer again it will not be through *him*. Some day, dearest Mrs. Martin, I will show you and dear Mr. Martin how his *prophecy was fulfilled*, saving some picturesque particulars. I did not know before that Saul was among the prophets.

My poor husband suffered very much from the constraint imposed on him by my position, and did, for the first time in his life, for my sake do that in secret which he could not speak upon the housetops. *Mea culpa* all of it! If one of us two is to be blamed, it is I, at whose representation of circumstances he submitted to do violence to his own self-respect. I would not suffer him to

tell even our dear common friend Mr. Kenyon. I felt that it would be throwing on dear Mr. Kenyon a painful responsibility, and involve him in the blame ready to fall. And dear dear Mr. Kenyon, like the noble, generous friend I love so deservedly, comprehends all at a word, sends us *not* his forgiveness, but his sympathy, his affection, the kindest words which can be written! I cannot tell you all his inexpressible kindness to us both. He justifies us to the uttermost, and, in that, all the grateful attachment we had, each on our side, so long professed towards him. Indeed, in a note I had from him yesterday, he uses this strong expression after gladly speaking of our successful journey: 'I considered that you had *perilled your life* upon this undertaking, and, reflecting upon your last position, I thought that *you had done well*.' But my life was not perilled in the journey. The agitation and fatigue were evils, to be sure, and Mrs. Jameson, who met us in Paris by a happy accident, thought me 'looking horribly ill' at first, and persuaded us to rest there for a week on the promise of accompanying us herself to Pisa to help Robert to take care of me. He, who was in a fit of terror about me, agreed at once, and so she came with us, she and her young niece, and her kindness leaves us both very grateful. So kind she was, and is — for still she is in Pisa — opening her arms to us and calling us 'children of light' instead of ugly names, and declaring that she should have been 'proud' to have had anything to do with our marriage. Indeed, we hear every day kind speeches and messages from people such as Mr. Chorley of the 'Athenæum,' who 'has tears in his eyes,' Monckton Milnes, Barry Cornwall, and other friends of my husband's, but who only know *me* by my books, and I want the love and sympathy of those who love me and whom I love. I was talking of the influence of the journey. The change of air has done me wonderful good notwithstanding the fatigue, and I am renewed to the point of being able to throw off most of my invalid habits, and of walking quite like a

woman. Mrs. Jameson said the other day, 'You are not *improved*, you are *transformed*.' We have most comfortable rooms here at Pisa, and have taken them for six months, in the best situation for health, and close to the Duomo and Leaning Tower. It is a beautiful, solemn city, and we have made acquaintance with Professor Ferucci, who is about to admit us to [a sight][1] of the [University Lib]rary. We shall certainly [spend] next summer in Italy *somewhere*, and [talk] of Rome for the next winter, but, of course, this is all in air. Let me hear from you, dearest Mrs. Martin, and direct 'M. Browning, Poste Restante, Pisa' — it is best. Just before we left Paris I wrote to my aunt Jane, and from Marseilles to Bummy, but from neither have I heard yet.

With best love to dearest Mr. Martin, ever both my dear kind friends,

Your affectionate and grateful

Ba.

To Miss Mitford[2]

Moulins: October 2, 1846.

I began to write to you, my beloved friend, earlier, that I might follow your kindest wishes literally, and also to thank you at once for your goodness to me, for which may God bless you. But the fatigue and agitation have been very great, and I was forced to break off — as now I dare not revert to what is behind. I will tell you more another day. At Orleans, with your kindest letter, I had one from my dearest, gracious friend Mr. Kenyon, who, in his goodness, does more than exculpate — even *approves* — he wrote a joint letter to both of us. But oh, the anguish I have gone through! You are good, you are kind. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for saying to me that you would have gone to the church with me. *Yes, I know you*

[1] The original is torn here.

[2] This letter is of earlier date than the last, having been written *en route* between Orleans and Lyons; but it has seemed better to place the more detailed narrative first.

would. And for that very reason I forbore involving you in such a responsibility and drawing you into such a net. I took Wilson with me. I had courage to keep the secret to my sisters for their sakes, though I will tell you in strict confidence that it was known to them *potentially*, that is, the attachment and engagement were known, the necessity remaining that, for stringent reasons affecting their own tranquillity, they should be able to say at last, 'We were not instructed in this and this.' The dearest, fondest, most affectionate of sisters they are to me, and if the sacrifice of a life, or of all prospect of happiness, would have worked any lasting good to them, it should have been made even in the hour I left them. I knew *that* by the anguish I suffered in it. But a sacrifice, without good to anyone — I shrank from it. And also, it was the sacrifice of *two*. And *he*, as you say, had done everything for me, had loved me for reasons which had helped to weary me of myself, loved me heart to heart persistently — in spite of my own will — drawn me back to life and hope again when I had done with both. My life seemed to belong to him and to none other at last, and I had no power to speak a word. Have faith in me, my dearest friend, till you can know him. The intellect is so little in comparison to all the rest, to the womanly tenderness, the inexhaustible goodness, the high and noble aspiration of every hour. Temper, spirits, manners: there is not a flaw anywhere. I shut my eyes sometimes and fancy it all a dream of my guardian angel. Only, if it had been a dream, the pain of some parts of it would have awakened me before now; it is not a dream. I have borne all the emotion of fatigue miraculously well, though, of course, a good deal exhausted at times. We had intended to hurry on to the South at once, but at Paris we met Mrs. Jameson, who opened her arms to us with the most literal affectionateness, *kissed us both*, and took us by surprise by calling us 'wise people, wild poets or not.' Moreover, she fixed us in an apartment above her

own in the Hôtel de la Ville de Paris, that I might rest for a week, and crowned the rest of her goodnesses by agreeing to accompany us to Pisa, where she was about to travel with her young niece. Therefore we are five travelling, Wilson being with me. Oh, yes, Wilson came; her attachment to me never shrank for a moment. And Flush came, and I assure you that nearly as much attention has been paid to Flush as to me from the beginning, so that he is perfectly reconciled, and would be happy if the people at the railroads were not barbarians, and immovable in their evil designs of shutting him up in a box when we travel that way.

You understand now, ever dearest Miss Mitford, how the pause has come about writing. The week at Paris! Such a strange week it was, altogether like a vision. Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell scarcely. Our Balzac should be flattered beyond measure by my thinking of him at all. Which I did, but of *you* more. I will write and tell you more about Paris. You should go there indeed. And to our hotel, if at all. Once we were at the Louvre, but we kept very still of course, and were satisfied with the *idea* of Paris. I could have borne to live on there, it was all so strange and full of contrast. . . .

Now you will write — I feel my way on the paper to write this. Nothing is changed between us, nothing can ever interfere with sacred confidences, remember. I do not show letters, you need not fear my turning traitress. . . . Pray for me, dearest friend, that the bitterness of old affections may not be too bitter with me, and that God may turn those salt waters sweet again.

Pray for your grateful and loving

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

[Pisa:] November 5, [1846].

It was pleasant to me, my dearest friend, to think while I was reading your letter yesterday, that almost by that

time you had received mine, and could not even seem to doubt a moment longer whether I admitted your claim of hearing and of speaking to the uttermost. I recognised you too entirely as my friend. Because you had put faith in me, so much the more reason there was that I should justify it as far as I could, and with as much frankness (which was a part of my gratitude to you) as was possible from a woman to a woman. Always I have felt that you have believed in me and loved me; and, for the sake of the past and of the present, your affection and your esteem are more to me than I could afford to lose, even in these changed and happy circumstances. So I thank you once more, my dear kind friends, I thank you both — I never shall forget your goodness. I feel it, of course, the more deeply, in proportion to the painful disappointment in other quarters. . . . Am I bitter? The feeling, however, passes while I write it out, and my own affection for everybody will wait patiently to be 'forgiven' in the proper form, when everybody shall be at leisure properly. Assuredly, in the meanwhile, however, my case is not to be classed with other cases — what happened to me could not have happened, perhaps, with any other family in England. . . . I hate and loathe everything too which is clandestine — we *both* do, Robert and I; and the manner the whole business was carried on in might have instructed the least acute of the bystanders. The flowers standing perpetually on my table for the last two years were brought there by one hand, as everybody knew; and really it would have argued an excess of benevolence in an unmarried man with quite enough resources in London, to pay the continued visits he paid to me without some strong motive indeed. Was it his fault that he did not associate with everybody in the house as well as with me? He desired it; but no — that was not to be. The endurance of the pain of the position was not the least proof of his attachment to me. How I thank you for believing in him — how grateful it makes me! He will

justify to the uttermost that faith. We have been married two months, and every hour has bound me to him more and more; if the beginning was well, still better it is now — that is what he says to me, and I say back again day by day. Then it is an 'advantage,' to have an inexhaustible companion who talks wisdom of all things in heaven and earth, and shows besides as perpetual a good humour and gaiety as if he were — a fool, shall I say? or a considerable quantity more, perhaps. As to our domestic affairs, it is not to *my* honour and glory that the 'bills' are made up every week and paid more regularly 'than bard beseems,' while dear Mrs. Jameson laughs outright at our miraculous prudence and economy, and declares that it is past belief and precedent that we should not burn the candles at both ends, and the next moment will have it that we remind her of the children in a poem of Heine's who set up housekeeping in a tub, and inquired gravely the price of coffee. Ah, but she has left Pisa at last — left it yesterday. It was a painful parting to everybody. Seven weeks spent in such close neighbourhood — a month of it under the same roof and in the same carriages — will fasten people together, and then travelling *shakes* them together. A more affectionate, generous woman never lived than Mrs. Jameson, and it is pleasant to be sure that she loves us both from her heart, and not only *du bout des lèvres*. Think of her making Robert promise (as he has told me since) that in the case of my being unwell he would write to her instantly, and she would come at once if anywhere in Italy. So kind, so like her. She spends the winter in Rome, but an intermediate month at Florence, and we are to keep tryst with her somewhere in the spring, perhaps at Venice. If not, she says that she will come back here, for that certainly she will see us. She would have stayed altogether perhaps, if it had not been for her book upon art which she is engaged to bring out next year, and the materials for which are to be *sought*. As to Pisa, she liked it just as we like it. Oh, it is

so beautiful and so full of repose, yet not *desolate:* it is rather the repose of sleep than of death. Then after the first ten days of rain, which seemed to refer us fatally to Alfieri's 'piove e ripiove,' came as perpetual a divine sunshine, such cloudless, exquisite weather that we ask whether it may not be June instead of November. Every day I am out walking while the golden oranges look at me over the walls, and when I am tired Robert and I sit down on a stone to watch the lizards. We have been to your seashore, too, and seen your island, only he insists on it (Robert does) that it is not Corsica but Gorgona, and that Corsica is not in sight. *Beautiful* and blue the island was, however, in any case. It might have been Romero's instead of either. Also we have driven up to the foot of mountains, and seen them reflected down in the little pure lake of Ascuno, and we have seen the pine woods, and met the camels laden with faggots all in a line. So now ask me again if I enjoy my liberty as you expect. My head goes round sometimes, that is all. I never was happy before in my life. Ah, but, of course, the painful thoughts recur! There are some whom I love too tenderly to be easy under their displeasure, or even under their injustice. Only it seems to me that with time and patience my poor dearest papa will be melted into opening his arms to us — will be melted into a clearer understanding of motives and intentions; I cannot believe that he will forget me, as he says he will, and go on thinking me to be dead rather than alive and happy. So I manage to hope for the best, and all that remains, all my life here, *is* best already, could not be better or happier. And willingly tell dear Mr. Martin I would take him and you for witnesses of it, and in the meanwhile he is not to send me tantalising messages; no, indeed, unless you really, really, should let yourselves be wafted our way, and could you do so much better at Pau? particularly if Fanny Hanford should come here. Will she really? The climate is described by the inhabitants as a

'pleasant spring throughout the winter,' and if you were to see Robert and me threading our path along the shady side everywhere to avoid the 'excessive heat of the sun' in this November(!) it would appear a good beginning. We are not in the warm orthodox position by the Arno because we heard with our ears one of the best physicians of the place advise against it. 'Better,' he said, 'to have cool rooms to live in and warm walks to go out along.' The rooms we have are rather over-cool perhaps; we are obliged to have a little fire in the sitting-room, in the mornings and evenings that is; but I do not fear for the winter, there is too much difference to my feelings between this November and any English November I ever knew. We have our dinner from the Trattoria at two o'clock, and can dine our favorite way on thrushes and chianti with a miraculous cheapness, and no trouble, no cook, no kitchen; the prophet Elijah or the lilies of the field took as little thought for their dining, which exactly suits us. It is a continental fashion which we never cease commending. Then at six we have coffee, and rolls of milk, made of milk, I mean, and at nine our supper (call it supper, if you please) of roast chestnuts and grapes. So you see how primitive we are, and how I forget to praise the eggs at breakfast. The worst of Pisa is, or would be to some persons, that, socially speaking, it has its dullnesses; it is not lively like Florence, not in that way. But we do not want society, we shun it rather. We like the Duomo and the Campo Santo instead. Then we know a little of Professor Ferucci, who gives us access to the University library, and we subscribe to a modern one, and we have plenty of writing to do of our own. If we can do anything for Fanny Hanford, let us know. It would be too happy, I suppose, to have to do it for yourselves. Think, however, I am quite well, quite well. I can thank God, too, for being alive and well. Make dear Mr. Martin keep well, and not forget himself in the Herefordshire cold — draw him into the sun somewhere. Now write and tell me everything of your

plans and of you both, dearest friends. My husband bids me say that he desires to have my friends for his own friends, and that he is grateful to you for not crossing that feeling. Let him send his regards to you. And let me be throughout all changes,

Your ever faithful and most affectionate

BA.

I am expecting every day to hear from my dearest sisters. Write to them and love them for me.

This letter has been kept for several days from different causes. Will you inclose the little note to Miss Mitford? I do not hear from home, and am uneasy.

May God bless you!

November 9.

I am so vexed about those poems appearing just now in 'Blackwood.'[1] Papa must think it *impudent* of me. It is unfortunate.

To Miss Mitford

[Pisa]: November 5, 1846.

I have your letter, ever dearest Miss Mitford, and it is welcome even more than your letters have been used to be to me — the last charm was to come, you see, by this distance. For all your affection and solicitude, may you trust my gratitude; and if you love me a little, I love you indeed, and never shall cease. The only difference shall be that two may love you where one did, and for my part I will answer for it that if you could love the poor one you will not refuse any love to the other when you come to know him. I never

[1] *Blackwood's Magazine* for October 1846 contained the following poems by Mrs. Browning, some phrases in which might certainly be open to comment if they were supposed to have been deliberately chosen for publication at this particular time: 'A Woman's Shortcomings,' 'A Man's Requirements,' 'Maude's Spinning,' 'A Dead Rose,' 'Change on Change,' 'A Reed,' and 'Hector in the Garden.'

could bear to speak to you of *him* since quite the beginning, or rather I never could dare. But when you know him and understand how the mental gifts are scarcely half of him, you will not wonder at your friend, and, indeed, two years of steadfast affection from such a man would have overcome any woman's heart. I have been neither much wiser nor much foolisher than all the shes in the world, only much happier — the difference is in the happiness. Certainly I am not likely to repent of having given myself to him. I cannot, for all the pain received from another quarter, the comfort for which is that my conscience is pure of the sense of having broken the least known duty, and that the same consequence would follow any marriage of any member of my family with any possible man or woman. I look to time, and reason, and natural love and pity, and to the justification of the events acting through all; I look on so and hope, and in the meanwhile it has been a great comfort to have had not merely the indulgence but the approbation and sympathy of most of my old personal friends — oh, such kind letters; for instance, yesterday one came from dear Mrs. Martin, who has known me, she and her husband, since the very beginning of my womanhood, and both of them are acute, thinking people, with heads as strong as their hearts. I in my haste left England without a word to them, for which they might naturally have reproached me; instead of which they write to say that never *for a moment* have they doubted my having acted for the best and happiest, and to assure me that, having sympathised with me in every sorrow and trial, they delightedly feel with me in the new joy; nothing could be more cordially kind. See how I write to you as if I could speak — all these little things which are great things when seen in the light. Also R. and I are not in the least tired of one another notwithstanding the very perpetual *tête-à-tête* into which we have fallen, and which (past the first fortnight) would be rather a trial in many cases. Then our housekeeping may end perhaps in

being a proverb among the nations, for at the beginning it makes Mrs. Jameson laugh heartily. It disappoints her theories, she admits — finding that, albeit poets, we abstain from burning candles at both ends at once, just as if we did statistics and historical abstracts by nature instead. And do not think that the trouble falls on me. Even the pouring out of the coffee is a divided labour, and the ordering of the dinner is quite out of my hands. As for me, when I am so good as to let myself be carried upstairs, and so angelical as to sit still on the sofa, and so considerate, moreover, as *not* to put my foot into a puddle, why *my* duty is considered done to a perfection which is worthy of all adoration; it really is not very hard work to please this taskmaster. For Pisa, we both like it extremely. The city is full of beauty and repose, and the purple mountains gloriously seem to beckon us on deeper into the vineland. We have rooms close to the Duomo and Leaning Tower, in the great Collegio built by Vasari, three excellent bedrooms and a sitting-room, matted and carpeted, looking comfortable even for England. For the last fortnight, except the very last few sunny days, we have had rain; but the climate is as mild as possible, no cold, with all the damp. Delightful weather we had for the travelling. Ah, you, with your terrors of travelling, how you amuse me! Why, the constant change of air in the continued fine weather made me better and better instead of worse. It did me infinite good. Mrs. Jameson says she 'won't call me *improved*, but *transformed* rather.' I like the new sights and the movement; my spirits rise; I live — I can adapt myself. If you really tried it and got as far as Paris you would be drawn on, I fancy, and on — on to the East perhaps with H. Martineau, or at least as near it as we are here. By the way, or out of the way, it struck me as unfortunate that my poems should have been printed *just now* in 'Blackwood;' I wish it had been otherwise. Then I had a letter from one of my Leeds readers the other day to expostulate about the *inappropriateness* of

certain of them! The fact is that I sent a heap of verses swept from my desk and belonging to old feelings and impressions, and not imagining that they were to be used in that quick way. There can't be very much to like, I fear, apart from your goodness for what calls itself mine. Love me, dearest dear Miss Mitford, my dear kind friend — love me, I beg of you, still and ever, only ceasing when I cease to think of you; I will allow of that clause. Mrs. Jameson and Gerardine are staying at the hotel here in Pisa still, and we manage to see them every day; so good and true and affectionate she is, and so much we shall miss her when she goes, which will be in a day or two now. She goes to Florence, to Siena, to Rome to complete her work upon art, which is the object of her Italian journey. I read your vivid and glowing description of the picture to her, or rather I showed your picture to her, and she quite believes with you that it is most probably a *Velasquez*. Much to be congratulated the owner must be. I mean to know something about pictures some day. Robert does, and I shall get him to open my eyes for me with a little instruction. You know that in this place are to be seen the first steps of art, and it will be interesting to trace them from it as we go farther ourselves. Our present residence we have taken for six months; but we have dreams, dreams, and we discuss them like soothsayers over the evening's roasted chestnuts and grapes. Flush highly approves of Pisa (and the roasted chestnuts), because here he goes out every day and speaks Italian to the little dogs. Oh, Mr. Chorley, such a kind, feeling note he wrote to Robert from Germany, when he read of our marriage in 'Galignani;' we were both touched by it. And Monckton Milnes and others — very kind all. But in a particular manner I remember the kindness of my valued friend Mr. Horne, who never failed me nor could fail. Will you explain to him, or rather ask him to understand, why I did not answer his last note? I forget even Balzac here; tell me what he writes, and help me to love that dear,

generous Mr. Kenyon, whom I can love without help. And let me love you, and you love me.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Jameson

Collegio Ferdinando [Pisa]:
Saturday, November 23, 1846 [postmark].

We were delighted to have your note, dearest Aunt Nina, and I answer it with my feet on your stool, so that my feet are full of you even if my head is not, always. Now, I shall not go a sentence farther without thanking you for that comfort; you scarcely guessed perhaps what a comfort it would be, that stool of yours. I am even apt to sit on it for hours together, leaning against the sofa, till I get to be scolded for putting myself so into the fire, and prophesied of in respect to the probability of a 'general conflagration' of stools and Bas; on which the prophet is to leap from the Leaning Tower, and Flush to be left to make the funeral oration of the establishment. In the meantime, it really is quite a comfort that our housekeeping should be your 'example' at Florence; we have edifying countenances whenever we think of it. And Robert will not by any means believe that you passed us on our own ground, though the eleven pauls a week for breakfast, and my humility, seemed to suggest something of the sort. I am so glad, we are both so glad, that you are enjoying yourself at the fullest and highest among the wonders of art, and cannot be chilled in the soul by any of those fatal winds you speak of. For me, I am certainly better here at Pisa, though the penalty is to see Frate Angelico's picture with the remembrance of you rather than the presence. Here, indeed, we have had a little too much cold for two days; there was a feeling of frost in the air, and a most undeniable east wind which prevented my going out, and made me feel

less comfortable than usual at home. But, after all, one felt ashamed to call it *cold*, and Robert found the heat on the Arno insupportable; which set us both mourning over our 'situation' at the Collegio, where one of us could not get out on such days without a blow on the chest from the 'wind at the corner.' Well, experience teaches, and we shall be taught, and the cost of it is not so very much after all. We have seen your professor once since you left us (oh, the leaving!), or *spoken* to him once, I should say, when he came in one evening and caught us reading, sighing, yawning over 'Nicolò de' Lapi,' a romance by the son-in-law of Manzoni. Before we could speak, he called it 'excellent, très beau,' one of their very best romances, upon which, of course, dear Robert could not bear to offend his literary and national susceptibilities by a doubt even. *I*, not being so humane, thought that any suffering reader would be justified (under the rack-wheel) in crying out against such a book, as the dullest, heaviest, stupidest, lengthiest. Did you ever read it? If not, *don't*. When a father-in-law imitates Scott, and a son-in-law imitates his father-in-law, think of the consequences! Robert, in his zeal for Italy and against Eugène Sue, tried to persuade me at first (this was before the scene with your professor) that 'really, Ba, it wasn't so bad,' 'really you are too hard to be pleased,' and so on; but after two or three chapters, the dulness grew too strong for even his benevolence, and the yawning catastrophe (supposed to be peculiar to the 'Guida') overthrew him as completely as it ever did me, though we both resolved to hold on by the stirrup to the end of the two volumes. The catalogue of the library (for observe that we subscribe now — the object is attained!) offers a most melancholy insight into the actual literature of Italy. Translations, translations, translations from third and fourth and fifth rate French and English writers, chiefly French; the roots of thought, here in Italy, seem dead in the ground. It is well that they have great memories — nothing else lives.

We have had the kindest of letters from dear noble Mr. Kenyon; who, by the way, speaks of you as we like to hear him. Dickens is going to Paris for the winter, and Mrs. Butler[1] (he adds) is expected in London. Dear Mr. Kenyon calls me 'crotchety,' but Robert 'an incarnation of the good and the true,' so that I have everything to thank him for. There are noble people who take the world's side and make it seem 'for the *nonce*' almost respectable; but he gives up all the talk and fine schemes about money-making, and allows us to wait to see whether we want it or not — the money, I mean.

It is Monday, and I am only finishing this note. In the midst came letters from my sisters, making me feel so glad that I could not write. Everybody is well and happy, and dear papa *in high spirits* and *having people to dine with him every day*, so that I have not really done anyone harm in doing myself all this good. It does not indeed bring us a step nearer to the forgiveness, but to hear of his being in good spirits makes me inclined to jump, with Gerardine.[2] Dear Geddie! How pleased I am to hear of her being happy, particularly (perhaps) as she is not too happy to forget *me*. Is all that glory of art making her very ambitious to work and enter into the court of the Temple? . . .

Robert's love to you both. We often talk of our prospect of meeting you again. And for the *past*, dearest Aunt Nina, believe of me that I feel to you more gratefully than ever I can say, and remain, while I live,

Your faithful and affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Mitford

Pisa: December 19, [1846].

Ever dearest Miss Mitford, your kindest letter is three times welcome as usual. On the day you wrote it in the

[1] Better known as Fanny Kemble.

[2] Miss Gerardine Bate, Mrs. Jameson's niece.

frost, I was sitting out of doors, just in my summer mantilla, and complaining 'of the heat this December!' But woe comes to the discontented. Within these three or four days we too have had frost — yes, and a little snow, for the first time, says the Pisans, during five years. Robert says that the mountains are powdered toward Lucca, and I, who cannot see the mountains, can see the cathedral — the Duomo — how it glitters whitely at the summit, between the blue sky and its own walls of yellow marble. Of course I do not stir an inch from the fire, yet have to struggle a little against my old languor. Only, you see, this can't last! it is exceptional weather, and, up to the last few days, has been divine. And then, after all we talk of frost, my bedroom, which has no fireplace, shows not an English sign on the window, and the air is not *metallic* as in England. The sun, too, is so hot that the women are seen walking with fur capes and parasols, a curious combination.

I hope you had your visit from Mr. Chorley, and that you both had the usual pleasure from it. Indeed I *am* touched by what you tell me, and was touched by his note to my husband, written in the first surprise; and because Robert has the greatest regard for him, besides my own personal reasons, I do count him in the forward rank of our friends. You will hear that he has obliged us by accepting a trusteeship to a settlement, forced upon me in spite of certain professions or indispositions of mine; but as my husband's gifts, I had no right, it appeared, by refusing it to place him in a false position for the sake of what dear Mr. Kenyon calls my 'crotchets.' Oh, dear Mr. Kenyon! His kindness and goodness to us have been past thinking of, past thanking for; we can only fall into silence. He has thrust his hand into the fire for us by writing to papa himself, by taking up the management of my small money-matters when nearer hands let them drop, by justifying us with the whole weight of his personal

influence; all this in the very face of his own habits and susceptibilities. He has resolved that I shall not miss the offices of father, brother, friend, nor the tenderness and sympathy of them all. And this man is called a mere man of the world, and would be called so rightly if the world were a place for angels. I shall love him dearly and gratefully to my last breath; we both shall. . . .

Robert and I are deep in the fourth month of wedlock; there has not been a shadow between us, nor a *word* (and I have observed that all married people confess to *words*), and that the only change I can lay my finger on in him is simply and clearly an increase of affection. Now I need not say it if I did not please, and I should not please, you know, to tell a story. The truth is, that I who always did certainly believe in love, yet was as great a sceptic as you about the evidences thereof, and having held twenty times that Jacob's serving fourteen years for Rachel was not too long by fourteen days, I was not a likely person (with my loathing dread of marriage as a loveless state, and absolute contentment with single life as the alternative to the great majorities of marriages), I was not likely to accept a feeling not genuine, though from the hand of Apollo himself, crowned with his various godships. Especially too, in my position, I could not, would not, should not have done it. Then, genuine feelings are genuine feelings, and do not pass like a cloud. We are as happy as people can be, I do believe, yet are living in a way to *try* this new relationship of ours — in the utmost seclusion and perpetual *tête-à-tête* — no amusement nor distraction from without, except some of the very dullest Italian romances which throw us back on the memory of Balzac with reiterated groans. The Italians seem to hang on translations from the French — as we find from the library — not merely of Balzac, but Dumas, your Dumas, and reaching lower — long past De Kock — to the third and fourth rate novelists. What is purely Italian is, as far as we have read, purely dull and conventional. There

is no breath nor pulse in the Italian genius. Mrs. Jameson writes to us from Florence that in politics and philosophy the people are getting alive — which may be, for aught we know to the contrary, the poetry and imagination leave them room enough by immense vacancies.

Yet we delight in Italy, and dream of 'pleasures new' for the summer — *pastures* new, I should have said — but it comes to the same thing. The *padrone* in this house sent us in as a gift (in gracious recognition, perhaps, of our lawful paying of bills) an immense dish of oranges — two hanging on a stalk with the green leaves still moist with the morning's dew — every great orange of twelve or thirteen with its own stalk and leaves. Such a pretty sight! And better oranges, I beg to say, never were eaten, when we are barbarous enough to eat them day by day after our two o'clock dinner, softening, with the vision of them, the winter which has just shown itself. Almost I have been as pleased with the oranges as I was at Avignon by the *pomegranate* given to me much in the same way. Think of my being singled out of all our caravan of travellers — Mrs. Jameson and Gerardine Jameson[1] both there — for that significant gift of the pomegranates! I had never seen one before, and, of course, proceeded instantly to cut one 'deep down the middle'[2] — accepting the omen. Yet, in shame and confusion of face, I confess to not being able to appreciate it properly. Olives and pomegranates I set on the same shelf, to be just looked at and called by their names, but by no means eaten bodily.

But you mistake me, dearest friend, about the 'Blackwood' verses. I never thought of writing *applicative poems* — the heavens forfend! Only that just *then*, [in] the midst of all the talk, *any* verses of mine should come into print — and some of them to that *particular effect* — looked unlucky.

[1] This surname is a mistake on Mrs. Browning's part; see her letter of October 1, 1849.

[2] See *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, stanza xli.

I dare say poor papa (for instance) thought me turned suddenly to brass itself. Well, it is perhaps more my fancy than anything else, and was only an impression, even there. Mr. Chorley will tell you of a play of his, which I hope will make its way, though I do wonder how people can bear to write for the theatres in the present state of things. Robert is busy preparing a new edition of his collected poems which are to be so clear that everyone who has understood them hitherto will lose all distinction. We both mean to be as little idle as possible. . . . We shall meet one day in joy, I do hope, and then you will love my husband for his own sake, as for mine you do not hate him now.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To H. S. Boyd

[Pisa:] December 21 [1846].

You must let me tell you, my dearest Mr. Boyd, that I dreamed of you last night, and that you were looking very well in my dream, and that you told me to break a crust from a loaf of bread which lay by you on the table; which I accept on recollection as a sacramental sign between us, of peace and affection. Wasn't it strange that I should dream so of you? Yet no; thinking awake of you, the sleeping thoughts come naturally. Believe of me this Christmas time, as indeed at every time, that I do not forget you, and that all the distance and change of country can make no difference. Understand, too (for *that* will give pleasure to your goodness), that I am very happy, and not unwell, though it is almost Christmas. . . . .

Dearest friend, are you well and in good spirits? Think of me over the Cyprus, between the cup and the lip, though bad things are said to fall out so. We have, instead of

Cyprus, *Montepulciano*, the famous 'King of Wine,' crowned king, you remember, by the grace of a poet! Your Cyprus, however, keeps supremacy over me, and will not abdicate the divine right of being associated with you. I speak of wine, but we live here the most secluded, quiet life possible — reading and writing, and talking of all things in heaven and earth, and a little besides; and sometimes even laughing as if we had twenty people to laugh with us, or rather *hadn't*. We know not a creature, I am happy to say, except an Italian professor (of the university here) who called on us the other evening and praised aloud the scholars of England. 'English Latin was best,' he said, 'and English Greek foremost.' Do you clap your hands?

The new pope is more liberal than popes in general, and people write odes to him in consequence.

Robert is going to bring out a new edition of his collected poems, and you are not to read any more, if you please, till this is done. I heard of Carlyle's saying the other day 'that he hoped more from Robert Browning, for the people of England, than from any living English writer,' which pleased me, of course. I am just sending off an anti-slavery poem for America,[1] too ferocious, perhaps, for the Americans to publish: but they asked for a poem and shall have it.

If I ask for a letter, shall I have it, I wonder? Remember me and love me a little, and pray for me, dearest friend, and believe how gratefully and ever affectionately

I am your

Elibet,

[1] 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point' (*Poetical Works*, ii. 192). It was first printed in a collection called *The Liberty Bell*, for sale at the Boston National Anti-slavery Bazaar of 1848. It was separately printed in England in 1849 as a small pamphlet, which is now a rare bibliographical curiosity.

though Robert always calls me *Ba*, and thinks it the prettiest name in the world! which is a proof, you will say, not only of blind love but of deaf love.

It was during the stay at Pisa, and early in the year 1847, that Mr. Browning first became acquainted with his wife's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese.' Written during the course of their courtship and engagement, they were not shown even to him until some months after their marriage. The story of it was told by Mr. Browning in later life to Mr. Edmund Gosse, with leave to make it known to the world in general; and from Mr. Gosse's publication it is here quoted in his own words.[1]

'Their custom was, Mr. Browning said, to write alone, and not to show each other what they had written. This was a rule which he sometimes broke through, but she never. He had the habit of working in a downstairs room, where their meals were spread, while Mrs. Browning studied in a room on the floor above. One day, early in 1847, their breakfast being over, Mrs. Browning went upstairs, while her husband stood at the window watching the street till the table should be cleared. He was presently aware of some one behind him, although the servant was gone. It was Mrs. Browning, who held him by the shoulder to prevent his turning to look at her, and at the same time pushed a packet of papers into the pocket of his coat. She told him to read that, and to tear it up if he did not like it; and then she fled again to her own room.'

The sonnets were intended for her husband's eye alone; in the first instance, not even for his. No poems can ever have been composed with less thought of the public; perhaps for that very reason they are unmatched for simplicity and sincerity in all Mrs. Browning's work. Her genius in them has full mastery over its material, as it has

[1] *Critical Kit-Kats*, by E. Gosse, p. 2 (1896).

in few of her other poems. All impurities of style or rhythm are purged away by the fire of love; and they stand, not only highest among the writings of their authoress, but also in the very forefront of English love-poems. With the single exception of Rossetti, no modern English poet has written of love with such genius, such beauty, and such sincerity, as the two who gave the most beautiful example of it in their own lives.

Fortunately for all those who love true poetry, Mr. Browning judged rightly of the obligation laid upon him by the possession of these poems. 'I dared not,' he said, 'reserve to myself the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare's.' Accordingly he persuaded his wife to commit the printing of them to her friend, Miss Mitford; and in the course of the year they appeared in a slender volume, entitled 'Sonnets, by E. B. B.,' with the imprint 'Reading, 1847,' and marked 'Not for publication.' It was not until three years later that they were offered to the general public, in the volumes of 1850. Here first they appeared under the title of 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' — a title suggested by Mr. Browning (in preference to his wife's proposal, 'Sonnets translated from the Bosnian') for the sake of its half-allusion to her other poem, 'Catarina to Camoens,' which was one of his chief favourites among her works.

To these sonnets there is, however, no allusion in the letters here published, which say little for some time of her own work.

To Miss Mitford

February 8, 1847.

But, my dearest Miss Mitford, your scheme about Leghorn is drawn out in the clouds. Now just see how impossible. Leghorn is fifteen miles off, and though there is a railroad there is no liberty for French books to wander

backwards and forwards without inspection and seizure. Why, do remember that we are in Italy after all! Nevertheless, I will tell you what we have done: transplanted our subscription from the Italian library, which was wearing us away into a misanthropy, or at least despair of the wits of all Southerns, into a library which has a tolerable supply of French books, and gives us the privilege besides of having a French newspaper, the 'Siècle,' left with us every evening. Also, this library admits (is allowed to admit on certain conditions) some books forbidden generally by the censureship, which is of the strictest; and although Balzac appears very imperfectly, I am delighted to find him at all, and shall dun the bookseller for the 'Instruction criminelle,' which I hope discharges your Lucien as a 'forçat' — neither man nor woman — and true poet, least of all. . . .

The 'Siècle' has for a *feuilleton* a new romance of Soulié's, called 'Saturnin Fichet,' which is really not good, and tiresome to boot. Robert and I began by each of us reading it, but after a little while he left me alone, being certain that no good could come of such a work. So, of course, ever since, I have been exclaiming and exclaiming as to the wonderful improvement and increasing beauty and glory of it, just to justify myself, and to make him sorry for not having persevered! The truth is, however, that but for obstinacy I should give up too. Deplorably dull the story is, and there is a crowd of people each more indifferent than each, to you; the pith of the plot being (very characteristically) that the hero has somebody exactly like him. To the reader, it's *all one* in every sense — who's who, and what's what. Robert is a warm admirer of Balzac and has read most of his books, but certainly — oh certainly — he does not in a general way appreciate our French people quite with our warmth; he takes too high a standard, I tell him, and won't listen to a story for a story's sake. I can bear to be amused, you know, without a strong pull on my admiration. So we have great wars sometimes, and I put up Dumas'

flag, or Soulié's, or Eugène Sue's (yet he was properly possessed by the 'Mystères de Paris') and carry it till my arms ache. The plays and vaudevilles he knows far more of than I do, and always maintains they are the happiest growth of the French school — setting aside the *masters*, observe — for Balzac and George Sand hold all their honours; and before your letter came, he had told me about the 'Kean' and the other dramas. Then we read together the other day the 'Rouge et Noir,' that powerful book of Stendhal's (Beyle), and he thought it very striking, and observed — what I had thought from the first and again and again — that it was exactly like Balzac *in the raw*, in the material, and undeveloped conception. What a book it is really, and so full of pain and bitterness, and the gall of iniquity! The new Dumas I shall see in time, perhaps, and it is curious that Robert had just been telling me the very story you speak of in your letter, from the 'Causes Célèbres.' I never read it — the more shame! Dearest friend, all this talk of French books and no talk about *you* — the *most* shame! You don't tell me enough of yourself, and I want to hear, because (besides the usual course of reasons) Mr. Chorley spoke of you as if you were not as cheerful as usual; do tell me. Ah! if you fancy that I do not love you as near, though being so far, you are unjust to me as you never were before. For myself, the brightness round me has had a cloud on it lately by an illness of poor Wilson's. . . . She would not go to Dr. Cook till I was terrified one night, while she was undressing me, by her sinking down on the sofa in a shivering fit. Oh, so frightened I was, and Robert ran out for a physician; and I could have shivered too, with the fright. But she is convalescent now, thank God! and in the meanwhile I have acquired a heap of practical philosophy, and have learnt how it is possible (in certain conditions of the human frame) to comb out and twist up one's own hair, and lace one's very own stays, and cause hooks and eyes to meet

behind one's very own back, besides making toast and water for Wilson — which last miracle, it is only just to say, was considerably assisted by Robert's counsels 'not quite to set fire to the bread' while one was toasting it. He was the best and kindest all that time, as even *he* could be, and carried the kettle when it was too heavy for me, and helped me with heart and head. Mr. Chorley could not have praised him too much, be very sure. I, who always rather appreciated him, do set down the thoughts I had as merely unjust things; he exceeds them all, indeed. Yes, Mr. Chorley has been very kind to us. I had a kind note myself from him a few days since, and do you know that we have a sort of hope of seeing him in Italy this year, with dearest Mr. Kenyon, who has the goodness to crown his goodness by a 'dream' of coming to see us? We leave Pisa in April (did I tell you that?) and pass through Florence towards the north of Italy — to *Venice*, for instance. In the way of writing, I have not done much yet — just finished my rough sketch of an anti-slavery ballad and sent it off to America, where nobody will print it, I am certain, because I could not help making it bitter. If they *do* print it, I shall think them more boldly in earnest than I fancy now. Tell me of Mary Howitt's new collection of ballads — are they good? I warmly wish that Mr. Chorley may succeed with his play; but how can Miss Cushman promise a hundred nights for an untried work? . . . Perhaps you may find the two last numbers of the 'Bells and Pomegranates' less obscure — it seems so to me. Flush has grown an absolute monarch and barks one distracted when he wants a door opened. Robert spoils him, I think. Do think of me as your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Have you seen 'Agnes de Misanie,' the new play by the author of 'Lucretia'? A witty feuilletoniste says of it that, besides all the unities of Aristotle, it comprises, from beginning to end, *unity of situation*. Not bad, is it? Madame

Ancelot has just succeeded with a comedy, called 'Une Année à Paris.' By the way, *shall you go to Paris this spring?*[1]

From Mr. Browning's family, though she had as yet had no opportunity of making acquaintance with them face to face, Mrs. Browning from the first met with an affectionate reception. The following is the first now extant of a series of letters written by her to Miss Browning, the poet's sister. The abrupt and private nature of the marriage never seems to have caused the slightest coldness of feeling in this quarter, though it must have caused anxiety; and the tone of the early letters, in which so new and unfamiliar a relation had to be taken up, does equal honour to the writer and to the recipient.

To Miss Browning

[Pisa: about February 1847.]

I must begin by thanking dearest Sarianna again for her note, and by assuring her that the affectionate tone of it quite made me happy and grateful together — that I am grateful to *all of you:* do *feel* that I am. For the rest, when I see (afar off) Robert's minute manuscripts, a certain distrust steals over me of anything I can possibly tell you of our way of living, lest it should be the vainest of repetitions, and by no means worth repeating, both at once. Such a quiet silent life it is — going to hear the Friar preach in the Duomo, a grand event in it, and the wind laying flat all our schemes about Volterra and Lucca! I have had to give up even the Friar for these three days past; there is nothing for me when I have driven out Robert to take his necessary walk but to sit and watch the pinewood blaze. He is grieved about the illness of his cousin, only I do hope that your next letter will confirm the happy change which stops the further

[1] A list of the works composing Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* is attached to this letter for Miss Mitford's benefit.

anxiety, and come soon for that purpose, besides others. Your letters never can come too often, remember, even when they have not to speak of illness, and I for my part must always have a thankful interest in your cousin for the kind part he took in the happiest event of my life. You have to tell us too of your dear mother — Robert is so anxious about her always. How deeply and tenderly he loves her and all of you, never could have been more manifest than now when he is away from you and has to talk *of* you instead of *to* you. By the way (or rather out of the way) I quite took your view of the purposed ingratitude to poor Miss Haworth[1] — it would have been worse in him than the sins of 'Examiner' and 'Athenæum.' If authors won't feel for one another, there's an end of the world of writing! Oh, I think he proposed it in a moment of hardheartedness — we all put on tortoise-shell now and then, and presently come out into the sun as sensitively as ever. Besides Miss Haworth has written to us very kindly; and kindness doesn't spring up everywhere, like the violets in your gravel walks. See how I understand Hatcham. Do try to love me a little, dearest Sarianna, and (with my grateful love always to your father and mother) let me be your affectionate sister,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
or rather Ba.

The correspondence with Mr. Westwood, which had lapsed for a considerable time, was resumed with the following letter:

[1] Miss E. F. Haworth (several letters to whom are given farther on) was an old friend of Robert Browning's, and published a volume of verse in 1847, to which this passage seems to allude.

To Mr. Westwood

Collegio Ferdinando, Pisa: March 10, 1847.

If really, my dear Mr. Westwood, it was an 'ill temper,' in you, causing the brief note, it was a most flattering ill temper, and I thank you just as I have had reason to do for the good nature which has caused you to bear with me so often and so long. You have been misled on some points. I did not go to Italy last year, or rather the year before last! I was disappointed and forced to stay in Wimpole Street after all; but the winter being so mild, so miraculously mild for England you may remember, I was spared my winter relapse and left liberty for new plans such as I never used to think were in my destiny. Such a change it is to me, such a strange happiness and freedom, and you must not in your kindness wish me back again, but rather be contented, like a friend as you are, to hear that I am very happy and very well, and still doubtful whether all the brightness cannot be meant for *me!* It is just as if the sun rose again at 7 o'clock P.M. The strangeness seems so great. . . .

I am now very well, and so happy as not to think much of it, except for the sake of another. And do you fancy how I feel, carried into the visions of nature from my gloomy room? Even now I walk as in a dream. We made a pilgrimage from Avignon to Vaucluse in right poetical duty, and I and my husband sate upon two stones in the midst of the fountain which in its dark prison of rocks flashes and roars and testifies to the memory of Petrarch. It was louder and fuller than usual when we were there, on account of the rains; and Flush, though by no means born to be a hero, considered my position so outrageous that he dashed through the water to me, splashing me all over, so he is baptised in Petrarch's name. The scenery is full of grandeur, the rocks sheathe themselves into the sky, and nothing grows there except a little cypress

here and there, and a straggling olive tree; and the fountain works out its soul in its stony prison, and runs away in a green rapid stream. Such a striking sight it is. I sate upon deck, too, in our passage from Marseilles to Genoa, and had a vision of mountains, six or seven deep, one behind another. As to Pisa, call it a beautiful town, you cannot do less with Arno and its palaces, and above all the wonderful Duomo and Campo Santo, and Leaning Tower and Baptistery, all of which are a stone's throw from our windows. We have rooms in a great college-house built by Vasari, and fallen into desuetude from collegiate purposes; and here we live the quietest and most *tête-à-tête* of lives, knowing nobody, hearing nothing, and for nearly three months together never catching a glimpse of a paper. Oh, how wrong you were about the 'Times.' Now, however, we subscribe to a French and Italian library, and have a French newspaper every evening, the 'Siècle,' and so look through a loophole at the world. Yet, not too proud are we, even now, for all the news you will please to send us in charity: 'da obolum Belisario!'

What do you mean about poor Tennyson? I heard of him last on his return from a visit to the Swiss mountains, which 'disappointed him,' he was *said to say*. Very wrong, either of mountains or poet!

Tell me if you make acquaintance with Mrs. Howitt's new ballads.

Mrs. Jameson is engaged in a work on art which will be very interesting. . . .

Flush's love to your Flopsy. Flush has grown very overbearing in this Italy, I think because my husband spoils him (if not for the glory at Vaucluse); Robert declares that the said Flush considers him, my husband, to be created for the special purpose of doing him service, and really it looks rather like it.

Never do I see the 'Athenæum' now, but before I left England some pure gushes between the rocks reminded

me of you. Tell me all you can; it will all be like rain upon dry ground. My husband bids me offer his regards to you — if you will accept them; and that you may do it ask your heart. I will assure you (aside) that his poetry is as the prose of his nature: he himself is so much better and higher than his own works.

In the middle of April the Brownings left Pisa and journeyed to Florence, arriving there on April 20. There, however, the programme was arrested, and, save for an abortive excursion to Vallombrosa, whence they were repulsed by the misogynist principles of the monks, they continued to reside in Florence for the remainder of the year. Their first abode was in the Via delle Belle Donne; but after the return from Vallombrosa, in August, they moved across the river, and took furnished rooms in the Palazzo Guidi, the building which, under the name of 'Casa Guidi,' is for ever associated with their memory.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: April 24, 1847.

I received your letter, my dearest friend, by this day's post, and wrote a little note directly to the office as a trap for the feet of your travellers. If they escape us after all, therefore, they may praise their stars for it rather than my intentions — *our* intentions, I should say, for Robert will gladly do everything he can in the way of expounding a text or two of the glories of Florence, and we both shall be much pleased and cordially pleased to learn more of Fanny and her brother than the glance at Pisa could teach us. As for me, she will let me have a little talking for my share: I can't walk about or see anything. I lie here flat on the sofa

in order to be wise; I rest and take port wine by wine-glasses; and a few more days of it will prepare me, I hope and trust, for an interview with the Venus de' Medici. Think of my having been in Florence since Tuesday, this being Saturday, and not a step taken into the galleries. It seems a disgrace, a sort of involuntary disgraceful act, or rather no-act, which to complain of relieves one to some degree. And how kind of you to wish to hear from me of myself! There is nothing really much the matter with me; I am just *weak*, sleeping and eating dreadfully well considering that Florence isn't seen yet, and 'looking well,' too, says Mrs. Jameson, who, with her niece, is our guest just now. It would have been wise if I had rested longer at Pisa, but, you see, there was a long engagement to meet Mrs. Jameson here, and she expressed a very kind unwillingness to leave Italy without keeping it: also she had resolved to come out of her way on purpose for this, and as I had the consent of my physician, we determined to perform our part of the compact; and in order to prepare for the longer journey I went out in the carriage a little too soon, perhaps, and a little too long. At least, if I had kept quite still I should have been strong by this time — not that I have done myself harm in the serious sense, observe — and now the affair is accomplished, I shall be wonderfully discreet and self-denying, and resist Venuses and Apollos like some one wiser than the gods themselves. My chest is very well; there has been no symptom of evil in that quarter. . . . We took the whole coupé of the diligence — but regretted our first plan of the *vettura* nevertheless — and now are settled in very comfortable rooms in the 'Via delle Belle Donne' just out of the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, very superior rooms to our apartment in Pisa, in which we were cheated to the uttermost with all the subtlety of Italy and to the full extent of our ignorance; think what *that* must have been! Our present apartment, with the hire of a grand piano and music, does not cost us so much within ever so

many francisconi. Oh, and you don't frighten me though we are on the north side of the Arno! We have taken our rooms for two months, and may be here longer, and the fear of the heat was stronger with me than the fear of the cold, or we might have been in the Pitti and 'arrostiti' by this time. We expected dear Mrs. Jameson on Saturday, but she came on Friday evening, having suddenly remembered that it was Shakespeare's birthday, and bringing with her from Arezzo a bottle of wine to 'drink to his memory with two other poets,' so there was a great deal of merriment, as you may fancy, and Robert played Shakespeare's favorite air, 'The Light of Love,' and everybody was delighted to meet everybody, and Roman news and Pisan dullness were properly discussed on every side. She saw a good deal of Cobden in Rome, and went with him to the Sistine Chapel. He has no feeling for art, and, being very true and earnest, could only do his best to *try* to admire Michael Angelo; but here and there, where he understood, the pleasure was expressed with a blunt characteristic simplicity. Standing before the statue of Demosthenes, he said: 'That man is persuaded himself of what he speaks, and will therefore persuade others.' She liked him exceedingly. For my part, I should join in more admiration if it were not for his having *accepted money*, but paid patriots are no heroes of mine. 'Verily they have their reward.' O'Connell had arrived in Rome, and it was considered that he came only to die. Among the artists, Gibson and Wyatt were doing great things; she wishes us to know Gibson particularly. As to the Pope he lives in an atmosphere of love and admiration, and 'he is doing *what he can*,' Mrs Jameson believes. Robert says: 'A dreadful situation, after all, for a man of understanding and honesty! I pity him from my soul, for he can, at best, only temporise with truth.' But human nature is doomed to pay a high price for its opportunities. Delighted I am to have your good account of dear Mr. Martin, though you are naughty people to persist in going

to England so soon. Do write to me and tell me all about both of you. I will do what I can — like the Pope — but what can I do? Yes, indeed, I mean to enjoy art and nature too; one shall not exclude the other. This Florence seems divine as we passed the bridges, and my husband, who knows everything, is to teach and show me all the great wonders, so that I am reasonably impatient to try my advantages. His kind regards to you both, and my best love, dearest friends. . . .

Your very affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: May 12, [1847].

I was afraid, we both were afraid for you, dearest friend, when we saw the clouds gather and heard the rain fall as it did that day at Florence. It seemed impossible that you should be beyond the evil influence, should you have travelled ever so fast; but, after all, a storm in the Apennines, like many a moral storm, will be better perhaps than a calm to look back upon. We talked of you and thought of you, and missed you at coffee time, and regretted that so pleasant a week (for us) should have gone so fast, as fast as a dull week, or, rather, a good deal faster. Dearest friend, do believe that we *felt* your goodness in coming to us — in making us an object — before you left Italy; it fills up the measure of goodness and kindness for which we shall thank and love you all our lives. Never fancy that we can forget you or be less touched by the memory of what you have been to us in affection and sympathy — never. And don't *you* lose sight of *us;* do write often, and do, *do* make haste and come back to Italy, and then make use of us in any and every possible way as house-takers or house-mates, for we are ready to accept the lowest place or the highest. The week you gave us would

be altogether bright and glad if it had not been for the depression and anxiety on your part. May God turn it all to gain and satisfaction in some unlooked-for way. To be a *road-maker* is weary work, even across the Apennines of life. We have not science enough for it if we have strength, which we haven't either. Do you remember how Sindbad shut his eyes and let himself be carried over the hills by an eagle? *That* was better than to set about breaking stones. Also what you could do you have done; you have finished your part, and the sense of a fulfilled duty is in itself satisfying — is and must be. My sympathies go with you entirely, while I wish your dear Gerardine to be happy; I wish it from my heart. . . . Just after you left us arrived our box with the precious deeds, which are thrown into the cabinet for want of witnesses. And then Robert has had a letter from Mr. Forster with the date of *Shakespeare's birthday*, and overflowing with kindness really both to himself and me. It quite touched me, that letter. Also we have had a visitation from an American, but on the point of leaving Florence and very tame and inoffensive, and we bore it very well considering. He sent us a new literary periodical of the old world, in which, among other interesting matter, I had the pleasure of reading an account of my own 'blindness,' taken from a French paper (the 'Presse'), and mentioned with humane regret. Well! and what more news is there to tell you? I have been out once, only once, and only for an inglorious glorious drive round the Piazza Gran Duca, past the Duomo, outside the walls, and in again at the Cascine. It was like the trail of a vision in the evening sun. I saw the Perseus in a sort of flash. The Duomo is more after the likeness of a Duomo than Pisa can show; I like those masses in ecclesiastical architecture. Now we are plotting how to engage a carriage for a month's service without ruining ourselves, for we *must* see, and I *can't* walk and see, though much stronger than when we parted, and looking much better, as

Robert and the looking glass both do testify. I have seemed at last 'to leap to a conclusion' of convalescence. But the heat — oh, so hot it is. If it is half as hot with you, you must be calling on the name of St. Lawrence by this time, and require no 'turning.' I should not like to travel under such a sun. It would be too like playing at snap-dragon. Yes, 'brightly happy.' Women generally *lose* by marriage, but I have gained the world by mine. If it were not for some griefs, which are and must be griefs, I should be too happy perhaps, which is good for nobody. May God bless you, my dear, dearest friend. Robert must be content with sending his love to-day, and shall write another day. We both love you every day. My love and a kiss to dearest Gerardine, who is to remember to write to me.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To H. S. Boyd

Florence: May 26, 1847.

I should have answered your letter, my dearest friend, more quickly, but when it came I was ill, as you may have heard, and afterwards I wished to wait until I could send you information about the Leaning Tower and the bells.[1] The book you required, about the cathedral, Robert has tried in vain to procure for you. Plenty of such books, but *not in English*. In London such things are to be found, I should think, without difficulty, for instance, 'Murray's Handbook to Northern Italy,' though rather dear (12*s*.), would give you sufficiently full information upon the ecclesiastical glories both of Pisa and of this beautiful Florence, from whence I write to you. . . . I

[1] It will be remembered that Mr. Boyd took a great interest in bells and bell ringing. The passage omitted below contains an extract from Murray's *Handbook* with reference to the bells of Pisa.

will answer for the harmony of the bells, as we lived within a stone's throw of them, and they began at four o'clock every morning and rang my dreams apart. The Pasquareccia (the fourth) especially has a profound note in it, which may well have thrilled horror to the criminal's heart.[1] It was ghastly in its effects; dropped into the deep of night like a thought of death. Often have I said, 'Oh, how ghastly!' and then turned on my pillow and dreamed a bad dream. But if the bell founders at Pisa have a merited reputation, let no one say as much for the bellringers. The manner in which all the bells of all the churches in the city are shaken together sometimes would certainly make you groan in despair of your ears. The discord is fortunately indescribable. Well — but here we are at Florence, the most beautiful of the cities devised by man. . . .

In the meanwhile I have seen the Venus, I have seen the divine Raphaels. I have stood by Michael Angelo's tomb in Santa Croce. I have looked at the wonderful Duomo. This cathedral! After all, the elaborate grace of the Pisan cathedral is one thing, and the massive grandeur of this of Florence is another and better thing; it struck me with a sense of the sublime in architecture. At Pisa we say, 'How beautiful!' here we say nothing; it is enough if we can breathe. The mountainous marble masses overcome as we look up — we feel the weight of them on the soul. Tesselated marbles (the green treading its elaborate pattern into the dim yellow, which seems the general hue of the structure) climb against the sky, self-crowned with that prodigy of marble domes. It struck me as a wonder in architecture. I had neither seen nor imagined the like of it in any way. It seemed to carry its theology out with it; it signified more than a mere building. Tell me everything you want to know. I shall like to answer a thousand

[1] This bell was tolled on the occasion of an execution.

questions. Florence is beautiful, as I have said before, and must say again and again, most beautiful. The river rushes through the midst of its palaces like a crystal arrow, and it is hard to tell, when you see all by the clear sunset, whether those churches, and houses, and windows, and bridges, and people walking, in the water or out of the water, are the real walls, and windows, and bridges, and people, and churches. The only difference is that, down below, there is a double movement; the movement of the stream besides the movement of life. For the rest, the distinctness of the eye is as great in one as in the other. . . . Remember me to such of my friends as remember me kindly when unreminded by me. I am very happy — happier and happier.

ELIBET.

Robert's best regards to you always.

To Mrs. Jameson

Palazzo Guidi, Via Maggio, Florence:
August 7, 1847 [postmark].

You will be surprised perhaps, and perhaps not, dearest friend, to find that we are still at Florence. Florence 'holds us with a glittering eye;' there's a charm cast round us, and we can't get away. In the first place, your news of Recoaro came so late that, as you said yourself, we ought to have been there before your letter reached us. Nobody would encourage us to go north on any grounds, indeed, and if anybody speaks a word now in favour of Venice, straight comes somebody else speaking the direct contrary. Altogether, we took to making a plan of our own — a great, wild, delightful plan of plunging into the mountains and spending two or three months at the monastery of Vallombrosa, until the heat was passed, and dear Mr. Kenyon decided, and we could either settle for the winter at Florence or pass on to Rome. Could anything look more delightful than that? Well, we got a letter of recommendation to the abbot,

and left our apartment, Via delle Belle Donne, a week before our three months were done, thoroughly burned out by the sun; set out at four in the morning, reached Pelago, and from thence travelled five miles along a 'via non rotabile' through the most romantic scenery. Oh, such mountains! — as if the whole world were alive with mountains — such ravines — black in spite of flashing waters in them — such woods and rocks — travelled in basket sledges drawn by four white oxen — Wilson and I and the luggage — and Robert riding step by step. We were four hours doing the five miles, so you may fancy what rough work it was. Whether I was most tired or charmed was a *tug* between body and soul. The worst was that, there being a new abbot at the monastery — an austere man, jealous of his sanctity and the approach of women — our letter, and Robert's eloquence to boot, did nothing for us, and we were ingloriously and ignominiously expelled at the end of five days. For three days we were welcome; for two more we kept our ground; but after *that*, out we were thrust, with baggage and expectations. Nothing could be much more provoking. And yet we came back very merrily for disappointed people to Florence, getting up at three in the morning, and rolling or sliding (as it might happen) down the precipitous path, and seeing round us a morning glory of mountains, clouds, and rising sun, such as we never can forget — back to Florence and our old lodgings, and an eatable breakfast of coffee and bread, and a confession one to another that if we had won the day instead of losing it, and spent our summer with the monks, we should have grown considerably *thinner* by the victory. They make their bread, I rather imagine, with the sawdust of their fir trees, and, except oil and wine — yes, and plenty of beef (of *fleisch*, as your Germans say, of all kinds, indeed), which isn't precisely the fare to suit us — we were thrown for nourishment on the great sights around. Oh, but so beautiful were mountains and forests and waterfalls

that I could have kept my ground happily for the two months — even though the only book I saw there was the chronicle of their San Gualberto. Is he not among your saints? Being routed fairly, and having breakfasted fully at our old apartment, Robert went out to find cool rooms, if possible, and make the best of our position, and now we are settled magnificently in this Palazzo Guidi on a first floor in an apartment which *looks* quite beyond our means, and *would be* except in the dead part of the season — a suite of spacious rooms opening on a little terrace and furnished elegantly — rather to suit our predecessor the Russian prince than ourselves — but cool and in a delightful situation, six paces from the Piazza Pitti, and with right of daily admission to the Boboli gardens. We pay what we paid in the Via Belle Donne. Isn't this prosperous? You would be surprised to see *me*, I think, I am so very well (and look so) — dispensed from being carried upstairs, and inclined to take a run, for a walk, every now and then. I scarcely recognise myself or my ways, or my own spirits, all is so different. . . .

We have made the acquaintance of Mr. Powers,[1] who is delightful — of a most charming simplicity, with those great burning eyes of his. Tell me what you think of his boy listening to the shell. Oh, your Raphaels! how divine! And M. Angelo's sculptures! His pictures I leap up to in vain, and fall back regularly. Write of your book and yourself, and write soon; and let me be, as always, your affectionate Ba.

We are here for two months certain, and perhaps longer. Do write.

Dear Aunt Nina, — Ba has said something for me, I hope. In any case, my love goes with hers. I trust you are well and happy, as we are, and as we would make you if we could. Love to Geddie. Ever yours, [R. B.]

[1] The American sculptor.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: August 7, 1847.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — How I have been longing to get this letter, which comes at last, and justifies the longing by the pleasure it gives! . . . How kind, how affectionate you are to me, and how strong your claim is that I should thrust on you, in defiance of good taste and conventions, every evidence and assurance of my happiness, so as to justify your *faith* to yourselves and others. Indeed, indeed, dearest Mrs. Martin, you may 'exult' for me — and this though it should all end here and now. The uncertainties of life and death seem nothing to me. A year (nearly) is saved from the darkness, and if that one year has compensated for those that preceded it — which it has, abundantly — why, let it for those that shall follow, if it so please God. Come what may, I feel as if I never could have a right to murmur. I have been happy enough. Brought about too it was, indeed, by a sort of miracle which to this moment, when I look back, bewilders me to think of; and if you knew the details, counted the little steps, and could compare my moral position three years and a half ago with *this*, you would come to despise San Gualberto's miraculous tree at Vallombrosa, which, being dead, gave out green leaves in recognition of his approach, as testified by the inscription — do you remember? But you can't stop to-day to read mine, so rather I shall tell you of our exploit in the mountains. Only one thing I must say first, one thing which you must forgive me for the vanity of resolving to say at last, having had it in my head very often. There's a detestable engraving, which, if you have the ill luck to see (and you *may*, because, horrible to relate, it is in the shop windows), will you have the kindness, for my sake, not to fancy *like Robert?* — it being, as he says himself, the very image of '*a young man at Waterloo House*, in a moment of inspiration — "A lovely blue,

ma'am."' It is as like Robert as Flush. And now I am going to tell you of Vallombrosa. You heard how we meant to stay two months there, and you are to imagine how we got up at three in the morning to escape the heat (imagine me!) — and with all our possessions and a 'dozen of port' (which my husband doses me with twice a day because once it was necessary) proceeded to Pelago by vettura, and from thence in two sledges, drawn each by two white bullocks up to the top of the holy mountain. (Robert was on horseback.) Precisely it must be as you left it. Who can make a road up a house? We were four hours going five miles, and I with all my goodwill was dreadfully tired, and scarcely in appetite for the beef and oil with which we were entertained at the House of Strangers. We are simple people about diet, and had said over and over that we would live on eggs and milk and bread and butter during these two months. We might as well have said that we would live on manna from heaven. The things we had fixed on were just the impossible things. Oh, that bread, with the fetid smell, which stuck in the throat like Macbeth's amen! I am not surprised you recollect it! The hens had 'got them to a nunnery,' and objected to lay eggs, and the milk and the holy water stood confounded. But of course we spread the table-cloth, just as you did, over all drawbacks of the sort; and the beef and oil, as I said, and the wine too, were liberal and excellent, and we made our gratitude apparent in Robert's best Tuscan — in spite of which we were turned out ignominiously at the end of five days, having been permitted to overstay the usual three days by only two. No, nothing could move the lord abbot. He is a new abbot, and given to sanctity, and has set his face against women. 'While he is abbot,' he said to our mediating monk, 'he *will* be abbot.' So he is abbot, and we had to come back to Florence. As I read in the 'Life of San Gualberto,' laid on the table for the edification of strangers, the brothers

attain to sanctification, among other means, by cleaning out pigsties with their bare hands, without spade or shovel; but *that* is uncleanliness enough — they wouldn't touch the little finger of a woman. Angry I was, I do assure you. I should have liked to stay there, in spite of the bread. We should have been only a little thinner at the end. And the scenery — oh, how magnificent! How we enjoyed that great, silent, ink-black pine wood! And do you remember the sea of mountains to the left? How grand it is! We were up at three in the morning again to return to Florence, and the glory of that morning sun breaking the clouds to pieces among the hills is something ineffaceable from my remembrance. We came back ignominiously to our old rooms, but found it impossible to stay on account of the suffocating heat, yet we scarcely could go far from Florence, because of Mr. Kenyon and our hope of seeing him here (since lost). A perplexity ended by Robert's discovery of our present apartments, on the Pitti side of the river (indeed, close to the Grand Duke's palace), consisting of a suite of spacious and delightful rooms, which come within our means only from the deadness of the summer season, comparatively quite cool, and with a terrace which I enjoy to the uttermost through being able to walk there without a bonnet, by just stepping out of the window. The church of San Felice is opposite, so we haven't a neighbour to look through the sunlight or moonlight and take observations. Isn't that pleasant altogether? We ordered back the piano and the book subscription, and settled for two months, and forgave the Vallombrosa monks for the wrong they did us, like secular Christians. What is to come after, I can't tell you. But probably we shall creep slowly along toward Rome, and spend some hot time of it at Perugia, which is said to be cool enough. I think more of other things, wishing that my dearest, kindest sisters had a present as bright as mine — to think nothing at all of the future. Dearest Henrietta's position has long made me uneasy,

and, since she frees me into confidence by her confidence to you, I will tell you so. Most undesirable it is that this should be continued, and yet where is there a door open to escape?[1] . . . My dear brothers have the illusion that nobody should marry on less than two thousand a year. Good heavens! how preposterous it does seem to me! *We* scarcely spend three hundred, and I have every luxury I ever had, and which it would be so easy to give up, at need; and Robert wouldn't sleep, I think, if an unpaid bill dragged itself by any chance into another week. He says that when people get into 'pecuniary difficulties,' his 'sympathies always go with the butchers and bakers.' So we keep out of scrapes yet, you see. . . .

Your grateful and most affectionate

Ba.

We have had the most delightful letter from Carlyle, who has the goodness to say that not for years has a marriage occurred in his private circle in which he so heartily rejoiced as in ours. He is a personal friend of Robert's, so that I have reason to be very proud and glad.

Robert's best regards to you both always, and he is no believer in magnetism (only *I* am). Do mention Mr. C. Hanford's health. How strange that he should come to witness my marriage settlement! Did you hear?

[1] Miss Henrietta Barrett was engaged to Captain Surtees Cook, an engagement of which her brothers, as well as her father, disapproved, partly on the ground of insufficiency of income. Ultimately the difficulty was solved in the same way as in the case of Mrs. Browning.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: August 20, [1847].

I have received your letter at last, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, not the missing letter, but the one which comes to make up for it and to catch up my thoughts, which were grumbling at high tide, I do assure you. . . . As you observed last year (not without reason), these are the days of marrying and giving in marriage. Mr. Horne, you see.[1] . . . With all my heart I hope he may be very happy. Men risk a good deal in marriage, though not as much as women do; and on the other hand, the singleness of a man when his youth is over is a sadder thing than the saddest which an unmarried woman can suffer. Nearly all my friends of both sexes have been draining off into marriage these two years, scarcely one will be left in the sieve, and I may end by saying that I have happiness enough for my own share to be divided among them all and leave everyone contented. For me, I take it for pure magic, this life of mine. Surely nobody was ever so happy before. I shall wake some morning with my hair all dripping out of the enchanted bucket, or if not we shall both claim the 'Flitch' next September, if you can find one for us in the land of Cockaigne, drying in expectancy of the revolution in Tennyson's 'Commonwealth.' Well, I don't agree with Mr. Harness in admiring the lady of 'Locksley Hall.' I *must* either pity or despise a woman who could have married Tennyson and chose a common man. If happy in her choice, I despise her. That's matter of opinion, of course. You may call it matter of foolishness when I add that I personally would rather be teased a little and smoked over a good deal by a man whom I could look up to and be proud of than have my feet kissed all day by a Mr. Smith in boots and a waistcoat, and thereby chiefly distinguished. Neither I nor another, perhaps, had quite a right to expect a combination

[1] Mr. Horne was just engaged to be married.

of qualities, such as meet, though, in my husband, who is as faultless and pure in his private life as any Mr. Smith of them all, who would not owe five shillings, who lives like a woman in abstemiousness on a pennyworth of wine a day, never touches a cigar even. . . . Do you hear, as we do, from Mr. Forster, that his[1] new poem is his best work? As soon as you read it, let me have your opinion. The subject seems almost identical with one of Chaucer's. Is it not so? We have spent here the most delightful of summers, notwithstanding the heat, and I begin to comprehend the possibility of St. Lawrence's ecstasies on the gridiron. Very hot it certainly has been and is, yet there have been cool intermissions; and as we have spacious and airy rooms, and as Robert lets me sit all day in my white dressing gown without a single masculine criticism, and as we can step out of the window on a sort of balcony terrace which is quite private and swims over with moonlight in the evenings, and as we live upon water melons and iced water and figs and all manner of fruit, we bear the heat with an angelic patience and felicity which really are edifying. We tried to make the monks of Vallombrosa let us stay with them for two months, but their new abbot said or implied that Wilson and I stank in his nostrils, being women, and San Gualberto, the establisher of their order, had enjoined on them only the mortification of cleaning out pigsties without fork or shovel. So here a couple of women besides was (as Dickens's American said) 'a piling it up rayther too mountainious.' So we were sent away at the end of five days. So provoking! Such scenery, such hills, such a sea of hills looking alive among the clouds. *Which* rolled, it was difficult to discern. Such pine woods, supernaturally silent, with the ground black as ink, such chestnut and beech forests hanging from the mountains, such rocks and torrents, such chasms and ravines. There were eagles there, too, [and] there was *no road*. Robert went on horseback, and Flush, Wilson, and I were drawn

[1] Tennyson's *Princess* had just been published.

in a sledge (i.e. an old hamper, a basket wine hamper without a wheel) by two white bullocks up the precipitous mountains. Think of my travelling in that fashion in those wild places at four o'clock in the morning, a little frightened, dreadfully tired, but in an ecstasy of admiration above all! It was a sight to see before one died and went away to another world. Well, but being expelled ignominiously at the end of five days, we had to come back to Florence, and find a new apartment cooler than the old, and wait for dear Mr. Kenyon. And dear Mr. Kenyon does not come (not this autumn, but he may perhaps at the first dawn of spring), and on September 20 we take up our knapsacks and turn our faces towards Rome, I think, creeping slowly along, with a pause at Arezzo, and a longer pause at Perugia, and another perhaps at Terni. Then we plan to take an apartment we have heard of, over the Tarpeian Rock, and enjoy Rome as we have enjoyed Florence. More can scarcely be. This Florence is unspeakably beautiful, by grace both of nature and art, and the wheels of life slide on upon the grass (according to continental ways) with little trouble and less expense. Dinner, 'unordered,' comes through the streets and spreads itself on our table, as hot as if we had smelt cutlets hours before. The science of material life is understood here and in France. Now tell me, what right has England to be the dearest country in the world? But I love dearly dear England, and we hope to spend many a green summer in her yet. The winters you will excuse us, will you not? People who are, like us, neither rich nor strong, claim such excuses. I am wonderfully well, and far better and stronger than before what you call the Pisan 'crisis.' Robert declares that nobody would know me, I *look* so much better. And you heard from dearest Henrietta. Ah, both of my dearest sisters have been perfect to me. No words can express my feelings towards their goodness. Otherwise, I have good accounts from home of my father's excellent health and spirits, which is better even than to hear

of his loving and missing me. I had a few kind lines yesterday from Miss Martineau, who invites us from Florence to Westmoreland. She wants to talk to me, she says, of 'her beloved Jordan.' She is looking forward to a winter of work by the lakes, and to a summer of gardening. The kindest of letters Robert has had from Carlyle, who makes us very happy by what he says of our marriage. Shakespeare's favorite air of the 'Light of Love,' with the full evidence of its being Shakespeare's favorite air, is given in Charles Knight's edition. Seek for it there. Now do write to me and at length, and tell me everything of yourself. Flush hated Vallombrosa, and was frightened out of his wits by the pine forests. Flush likes civilised life, and the society of little dogs with turned-up tails, such as Florence abounds with. Unhappily it abounds also with *fleas*, which afflict poor Flush to the verge sometimes of despair. Fancy Robert and me down on our knees combing him, with a basin of water on one side! He suffers to such a degree from fleas that I cannot bear to witness it. He tears off his pretty curls through the irritation. Do you know of a remedy? Direct to me, Poste Restante, Florence. Put *via* France. Let me hear, do; and everything of yourself, mind. Is Mrs. Partridge in better spirits? Do you read any new French books? Dearest friend, let me offer you my husband's cordial regards, with the love of your own affectionate

E. B. B., Ba.

To Mr. Westwood

Florence: September 1847.

Yes, indeed, my dear Mr. Westwood, I have seen 'friars.' We have been on a pilgrimage to Vallombrosa, and while my husband rode up and down the precipitous mountain paths, I and my maid and Flush were dragged in a hamper by two white bullocks — and such scenery; such

hilly peaks, such black ravines and gurgling waters, and rocks and forests above and below, and at last such a monastery and such friars, who wouldn't let us stay with them beyond five days for fear of corrupting the fraternity. The monks had a new abbot, a St. Sejanus of a holy man, and a petticoat stank in his nostrils, said he, and all the beseeching which we could offer him with joined hands was classed with the temptations of St. Anthony. So we had to come away as we went, and get the better as we could of our disappointment, and really it was a disappointment not to be able to stay our two months out in the wilderness as we had planned it, to say nothing of the heat of Florence, to which at the moment it was not pleasant to return. But we got new lodgings in the shade and comforted ourselves as well as we could. 'Comforted' — there's a word for Florence — that ingratitude was a slip of the pen, believe me. Only we had set our hearts upon a two months' seclusion in the deep of the pine forests (which have such a strange dialect in the silence they speak with), and the mountains were divine, and it was provoking to be crossed in our ambitions by that little holy abbot with the red face, and to be driven out of Eden, even to Florence. It is said, observe, that Milton took his description of Paradise from Vallombrosa — so driven out of Eden we were, literally. To Florence, though ! and what Florence is, the tongue of man or poet may easily fail to describe. The most beautiful of cities, with the golden Arno shot through the breast of her like an arrow, and 'non dolet' all the same. For what helps to charm here is the innocent gaiety of the people, who, for ever at feast day and holiday celebrations, come and go along the streets, the women in elegant dresses and with glittering fans, shining away every thought of Northern cares and taxes, such as make people grave in England. No little orphan on a house step but seems to inherit naturally his slice of water-melon and bunch of purple grapes, and the rich fraternise with the poor as we are

unaccustomed to see them, listening to the same music and walking in the same gardens, and looking at the same Raphaels even! Also we were glad to be here just now when there is new animation and energy given to Italy by this new wonderful Pope, who is a great man and doing greatly. I hope you give him your sympathies. Think how seldom the liberation of a people begins from the throne, *à fortiori* from a papal throne, which is so high and straight.[1] And the spark spreads! here is even our Grand Duke conceding the civic guard,[2] and forgetting his Austrian prejudices. The world learns, it is pleasant to observe. . . .

So well I am, dear Mr. Westwood, and so happy after a year's trial of the stuff of marriage, happier than ever, perhaps, and the revolution is so complete that one has to learn to stand up straight and steadily (like a landsman in a sailing ship) before one can do any work with one's hand and brain.

We have had a delightful letter from Carlyle, who loves my husband, I am proud to say.

[1] 'This country saving is a glorious thing:
And if a common man achieved it? well.
Say, a rich man did? excellent. A king?
That grows sublime. A priest? Improbable.
A pope? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
So heavy round the neck of it — albeit
We fain would grant the possibility
For thy sake, Pio Nono!'

Casa Guidi Windows, part i.

[2] The grant of a National Guard was made by the Grand Duke of Tuscany on September 4, 1847, in defiance of the threat of Austria to occupy any Italian state in which such a concession was made to popular aspirations.

To Miss Mitford

[Florence:] October 1, 1847 [postmark].

Ever dearest Miss Mitford, — I am delighted to have your letter, and lose little time in replying to it. The lost letter meanwhile does not appear. The moon has it, to make more shine on these summer nights; if still one may say 'summer' now that September is deep and that we are cool as people hoped to be when at hottest. . . . Do tell me your full thought of the commonwealth of women.[1] I begin by agreeing with you as to his implied under-estimate of women; his women are too voluptuous; however, of the most refined voluptuousness. His gardener's daughter, for instance, is just a rose: and 'a Rose,' one might beg all poets to observe, is as precisely *sensual* as fricasseed chicken, or even boiled beef and carrots. Did you read Mrs. Butler's 'Year of Consolation,' and how did you think of it in the main? As to Mr. Horne's illustrations of national music, I don't know; I feel a little jealous of his doing well what many inferior men have done well — men who couldn't write 'Orion' and the 'Death of Marlowe.' Now, dearest dear Miss Mitford, you shall call him 'tiresome' if you like, because I never heard him talk, and he may be tiresome for aught I know, of course; but you *sha'n't* say that he has not done some fine things in poetry. Now, you *know* what the first book of 'Orion' is, and 'Marlowe,' and 'Cosmo;' and you *sha'n't* say that you don't know it, and that when you forgot it for a moment, I did not remind you. . . . It was our plan to leave Florence on the 21st. We stay, however, one month longer, half through temptation, half through reason. Which is strongest, who knows? We quite love Florence, and have delightful rooms; and then, though I am quite well now as to my general health, it is thought better for me to travel a month hence. So I suppose we shall stay. In the meanwhile our Florentines

[1] In Tennyson's *Princess*.

kept the anniversary of our wedding day (and the establishment of the civic guard) most gloriously a day or two or three ago, forty thousand persons flocking out of the neighbourhood to help the expression of public sympathy and overflowing the city. The procession passed under our eyes into the Piazza Pitti, where the Grand Duke and all his family stood at the palace window melting into tears, to receive the thanks of his people. The joy and exultation on all sides were most affecting to look upon. Grave men kissed one another, and grateful young women lifted up their children to the level of their own smiles, and the children themselves mixed their shrill little *vivas* with the shouts of the people. At once, a more frenetic gladness and a more innocent manifestation of gladness were never witnessed. During three hours and a half the procession wound on past our windows, and every inch of every house seemed alive with gazers all that time, the white handkerchiefs fluttering like doves, and clouds of flowers and laurel leaves floating down on the heads of those who passed. Banners, too, with inscriptions to suit the popular feeling — 'Liberty' — the 'Union of Italy' — the 'Memory of the Martyrs' — 'Viva Pio Nono' — 'Viva Leopoldo Secondo' — were quite stirred with the breath of the shouters. I am glad to have seen that sight, and to be in Italy at this moment, when such sights are to be seen.[1] My wrist aches a little even now with the waving I gave to my handkerchief, I assure you, for Robert and I and Flush sate the whole sight out at the window, and would not be reserved with the tribute of our sympathy. Flush had his two front paws over the window sill, with his ears hanging down, but he confessed at last that he thought they were rather long about it,

[1] A picture of the same scene in verse will be found in *Casa Guidi Windows*, part i.:

> 'Shall I say
> What made my heart beat with exulting love
> A few weeks back,' &c.

particularly as it had nothing to do with dinner and chicken bones and subjects of consequence. He is less tormented and looks better; in excellent spirits and appetite always — and *thinner*, like your Flush — and very fond of Robert, as indeed he ought to be. On the famous evening of that famous day I have been speaking of, we lost him — he ran away and stayed away all night — which was too bad, considering that it was our anniversary besides, and that he had no right to spoil it. But I imagine he was bewildered with the crowd and the illumination, only as he *did* look so very guilty and conscious of evil on his return, there's room for suspecting him of having been very much amused, 'motu proprio,' as our Grand Duke says in the edict. He was found at nine o'clock in the morning at the door of our apartment, waiting to be let in — mind, I don't mean the Grand Duke. Very few acquaintances have we made at Florence, and very quietly lived out our days. Mr. Powers the sculptor is our chief friend and favorite, a most charming, simple, straightforward, genial American, as simple as the man of genius he has proved himself needs be. He sometimes comes to talk and take coffee with us, and we like him much. His wife is an amiable woman, and they have heaps of children from thirteen downwards, all, except the eldest boy, Florentines, and the sculptor has eyes like a wild Indian's, so black and full of light. You would scarcely wonder if they clave the marble without the help of his hands. We have seen besides the Hoppners, Lord Byron's friends at Venice, you will remember. And Miss Boyle, the niece of the Earl of Cork, and authoress and poetess on her own account, having been introduced once to Robert in London at Lady Morgan's, has hunted us out and paid us a visit. A very vivacious little person, with sparkling talk enough. Lord Holland has lent her mother and herself the famous Careggi Villa, where Lorenzo the Magnificent died, and they have been living there among the vines these four months. These and a few

American visitors are all we have seen at Florence. We live a far more solitary life than you do, in your village and with the 'prestige' of the country wrapping you round. Pray give your sympathies to our Pope, and call him a great man. For liberty to spring from a throne is wonderful, but from a papal throne is miraculous. That's my doxy. I suppose dear Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Chorley are still abroad. French books I get at, but at scarcely a new one, which is very provoking. At Rome it may be better. I have not read 'Martin' even, since the first volume in England, nor G. Sand's 'Lucretia.'

May God bless you. Think sometimes of your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

The 'month' lengthened itself out, and December found the Brownings still in Florence, and definitely established there for the winter. During this time, although there is no allusion to it in the letters, Mrs. Browning must have been engaged in writing the first part of 'Casa Guidi Windows' with its hopeful aspirations for Italian liberty. It was, indeed, a time when hope seemed justifiable. Pius IX. had ascended the papal throne — then a temporal as well as a spiritual sovereignty — in June 1846, with the reputation of being anxious to introduce liberal reforms, and even to promote the formation of a united Italy. The English Government was diplomatically advocating reform, in spite of the opposition of Austria; and its representative, Lord Minto, who was sent on a special mission to Italy to bring this influence to bear on the rulers of the various Italian States, was received with enthusiastic joy by the zealots for Italian liberty. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, as was noticed above, had taken the first step in the direction of popular government by the institution of a National Guard; and Charles Albert of Piedmont was always supposed to have the cause of Italy at heart in spite

of the vacillations of his policy. The catastrophe of 1848 was still in the distance; and for the moment a friend of freedom and of Italy might be permitted to hope much.

Yet a difference will be noticed between the tone of Mrs. Browning's letters at this time and that which marks her language in 1859. In 1847 she was still comparatively new to the country. She is interested in the experiment which she sees enacted before her; she feels, as any poet must feel, the attraction of the idea of a free and united Italy. But her heart is not thrown into the struggle as it was at a later time. She can write, and does, for the most part, write, of other matters. The disappointment of Milan and Novara could not break her heart, as the disappointment of Villafranca went near to doing. They are not, indeed, so much as mentioned in detail in the letters that follow. It is in 'Casa Guidi Windows' — the first part written in 1847–8, the second in 1851 — that her reflections upon Italian politics, alike in their hopes and in their failures, must be sought.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 8, 1847.

Have you thought me long, my dearest Miss Mitford, in writing? When your letter came we were distracted by various uncertainties, torn by wild horses of sundry speculations, and then, when one begins by delay in answering a letter, you are aware how a silence grows and grows. Also I heard *of* you through my sisters and Mrs. Duprey[?], and *that* made me lazier still. Now don't treat me according to the Jewish law, an eye for an eye; no! but a heart for a heart, if you please; and you never can have reason to reproach mine for not loving you. Think what we have done since I wrote last to you. Taken two houses, that is, two apartments, each for six months, presigning the contract. You will set it down as excellent poet's work in the way of domestic economy; but the fault was altogether mine

as usual, and my husband, to please me, took rooms which I could not be pleased by three days, through the absence of sunshine and warmth. The consequence was that we had to pay heaps of guineas away for leave to go away ourselves, any alternative being preferable to a return of illness, and I am sure I should have been ill if we had persisted in staying there. You can scarcely fancy the wonderful difference which the sun makes in Italy. Oh, he isn't a mere 'round O' in the air in this Italy, I assure you! He makes us feel that he rules the day to all intents and purposes. So away we came into the blaze of him here in the Piazza Pitti, precisely opposite the Grand Duke's palace, I with my remorse, and poor Robert without a single reproach. Any other man, a little lower than the angels, would have stamped and sworn a little for the mere relief of the thing, but as to *his* being angry with *me* for any cause, except not eating enough dinner, the said sun would turn the wrong way first. So here we are on the Pitti till April, in small rooms yellow with sunshine from morning to evening; and most days I am able to get out into the piazza, and walk up and down for some twenty minutes without feeling a shadow of breath from the actual winter. Also it is pleasant to be close to the Raffaels, to say nothing of the immense advantage of the festa days, when, day after day, the civic guard comes to show the whole population of Florence, their Grand Duke inclusive, the new helmets and epaulettes and the glory thereof. They have swords, too, I believe, somewhere. The crowds come and come, like children to see rows of dolls, only the children would tire sooner than the Tuscans. Robert said musingly the other morning as we stood at the window, 'Surely, after all this, they would *use* those muskets.' It's a problem, a 'grand peut-être.' I was rather amused by hearing lately that our civic heroes had the gallantry to propose to the ancient military that these last should do the night work, i.e. when nobody was looking on and there was no credit, as they found it dull and

fatiguing. Ah, one laughs, you see; one can't help it now and then. But at the real and rising feeling of the people by night and day one doesn't laugh indeed. I hear and see with the deepest sympathy of soul, on the contrary. I love the Italians, too, and none the less that something of the triviality and innocent vanity of children abounds in them. A delightful and most welcome letter was the last you sent me, my dearest friend. Your bridal visit must have charmed you, and I am glad you had the gladness of witnessing some of the happiness of your friend, Mrs. Acton Tyndal, *you* who have such quick sympathies, and to whom the happiness of a friend is a gain counted in your own. The swan's shadow is something in a clear water. For poor Mrs. ——, if she is really, as you say Mrs. Tyndal thinks, pining in an access of literary despondency, why *that* only proves to me that she is not happy otherwise, that her life and soul are not sufficiently filled for her woman's need. I cannot believe of any woman that she can think of *fame first.* A woman of genius may be absorbed, indeed, in the exercise of an active power, engrossed in the charges of the course and the combat; but this is altogether different to a vain and bitter longing for prizes, and what prizes, oh, gracious heavens! The empty cup of cold metal! *so* cold, *so* empty to a woman with a heart. So, if your friend's belief is true, still more deeply do I pity that other friend, who is supposed to be unhappy from such a cause. A few days ago I saw a bride of my own family, Mrs. Reynolds, Arlette Butler, who married Captain Reynolds some five months since. . . . Many were her exclamations at seeing me. She declared that such a change was never seen, I was so transfigured with my betterness: 'Oh, Ba, it is quite wonderful indeed!' We had been calculated on, during her three months in Rome, as a 'piece of resistance,' and it was a disappointment to find us here in a corner with the salt. Just as I was praised was poor Flush criticised. Flush has not recovered from the effects yet of the summer plague of

fleas, and his curls, though growing, are not grown. I never saw him in such spirits nor so ugly; and though Robert and I flatter ourselves upon 'the sensible improvement,' Arlette could only see him with reference to the past, when in his Wimpole Street days he was sleek and over fat, and she cried aloud at the loss of his beauty. Then we have had [another] visitor, Mr. Hillard, an American critic, who reviewed me in [the old] world, and so came to *view* me in the new, a very intelligent man, of a good, noble spirit. And Miss Boyle, ever and anon, comes at night, at nine o'clock, to catch us at our hot chestnuts and mulled wine, and warm her feet at our fire; and a kinder, more cordial little creature, full of talent and accomplishment, never had the world's polish on it. Very amusing, too, she is, and original, and a good deal of laughing she and Robert make between them. Did I tell you of her before, and how she is the niece of Lord Cork, and poetess by grace of certain Irish Muses? Neither of us know her writings in any way, but we like her, and for the best reasons. And this is nearly all, I think, we see of the 'face divine,' masculine and feminine, and I can't make Robert go out a single evening, not even to a concert, nor to hear a play of Alfieri's, yet we fill up our days with books and music (and a little writing has its share), and wonder at the clock for galloping. It's twenty-four o'clock with us almost as soon as we begin to count. Do tell me of Tennyson's book, and of Miss Martineau's. I was grieved to hear a distant murmur of a rumour of an apprehension of a return of her complaint: somebody said that she could not bear the *pressure of dress*, and that the exhaustion resulting from the fits of absorption in work and enthusiasm on the new subject of Egypt was painfully great, and that her friends feared for her. I should think that the bodily excitement and fatigue of her late travels must have been highly hazardous, and that indeed, throughout her convalescence, she should have more spared herself in climbing hills and

walking and riding distances. A strain obviously might undo everything. Still, I do hope that the bitter cup may not be filled for her again. What a wonderful discovery this substitute for ether inhalations[1] seems to be. Do you hear anything of its operation in your neighbourhood? We have had a letter from Mr. Horne, who appears happy, and speaks of his success in lecturing on Ireland, and of a new novel which he is about to publish in a separate form after having printed it in a magazine. We have not set up the types even of our *plans* about a book, very distinctly, but we shall do something some day, and you shall hear of it the evening before. Being too happy doesn't agree with literary activity quite as well as I should have thought; and then, dear Mr. Kenyon can't persuade us that we are not rich enough, so as to bring into force a lower order of motives. He talks of Rome still. Now write, dear, dearest Miss Mitford, and tell me of yourself and your health, and do, *do* love me as you used to do. As to French books, one may swear, but you can't get a new publication, except by accident, at this excellent celebrated library of Vieusseux, and I am reduced to read some of my favorites over again, I and Robert together. You ought to hear how we go to single combat, ever and anon, with shield and lance. The greatest quarrel we have had since our marriage, by the way (always excepting my crying conjugal wrong of not eating enough!), was brought up by Masson's pamphlet on the Iron Mask and Fouquet. I wouldn't be persuaded that Fouquet was 'in it,' and so 'the anger of my lord waxed hot.' To this day he says sometimes: 'Don't be cross, Ba! *Fouquet wasn't the Iron Mask after all.*'

God bless you, dearest Miss Mitford.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

We are here till April.

[1] Chloroform, then beginning to come into use.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: December 1847.

Indeed, my dear friend, you have a right to complain of *me*, whether or not *we* had any in thinking ourselves deeply injured creatures by your last silence. Yet when in your letter which came at last, you said, 'Write directly,' I *meant* to write directly; I did not take out my vengeance in a foregone malice, be very sure. Just at the time we were in a hard knot of uncertainties about Rome and Venice and Florence, and a cold house and a warm house: for instance we managed (that is *I* did, for altogether it was my fault) to take two apartments in the course of ten days, each for a term of six months, getting out of one of them by leaving the skirts of our garments, *rent*, literally, in the hand of the proprietor. You have heard most of this, I dare say, from Mr. Kenyon or my sisters. Now, too, you are aware of our being in Piazza Pitti, in a charmed circle of sun blaze. Our rooms are small, but of course as cheerful as being under the very eyelids of the sun must make everything; and we have a cook in the house who takes the office of *traiteur* on him and gives us English mutton chops at Florentine prices, both of us quite well and in spirits, and (though you never will believe this) happier than ever. For my own part, you know I need not say a word if it were not true, and I must say to you, who saw the beginning with us, that this end of fifteen months is just fifteen times better and brighter; the mystical 'moon' growing larger and larger till scarcely room is left for any stars at all: the only differences which have touched me being the more and more happiness. It would have been worse than unreasonable if in marrying I had expected one quarter of such happiness, and indeed I did not, to do myself justice, and every now and then I look round in astonishment and thankfulness together, yet with a sort of horror, seeing that this is not heaven after all. We live just

as we did when you knew us, just as shut-up a life. Robert never goes anywhere except to take a walk with Flush, which isn't my fault, as you may imagine: he has not been out one evening of the fifteen months; but what with music and books and writing and talking, we scarcely know how the days go, it's such a gallop on the grass. We are going through some of old Sacchetti's novelets now: characteristic work for Florence, if somewhat dull elsewhere. Boccaccios can't be expected to spring up with the vines in rows, even in this climate. We got a newly printed addition to Savonarola's poems the other day, very flat and cold, they did not catch fire when he was burnt. The most poetic thing in the book is his face on the first page, with that eager, devouring soul in the eyes of it. You may suppose that I am able sometimes to go over to the gallery and adore the Raphaels, and Robert will tell you of the divine Apollino which you missed seeing in Poggio Imperiale, and which I shall be set face to face before, some day soon, I hope. . . .

Father Prout was in Florence for some two hours in passing to Rome, and of course, according to contract of spirits of the air, Robert met him, and heard a great deal of you and Geddie (saw Geddie's picture, by the way, and thought it very like), was told much to the advantage of Mr. Macpherson,[1] and at the end of all, kissed in the open street as the speaker was about to disappear in the diligence. When you write, tell me of the *book*. Surely it will be out anon, and then you will be free, shall you not? Have you seen Tennyson's new poem, and what of it? Miss Martineau is to discourse about Egypt, I suppose; but in the meanwhile do you hear that she forswears mesmerism, as Mr. Spenser Hall does, according to the report Robert brings me home from the newspaper reading. Now I shall leave him room to stand on and speak a word to you. Give my love to Gerardine, and don't forget to mention her letter. I hope you are happy about your friends, and that, in particular,

[1] Miss Bate's *fiancé*.

Lady Byron's health is strengthening and to strengthen. Always my dear friend's

Most affectionate

E. B. B.

Dear Aunt Nina, — A corner is just the place for eating Christmas pies in, but for venting Christmas wishes, hardly! What has Ba told you and wished you in the way of love? I wish you the same and love you the same, but Geddie, being part of you, gets her due part. We are as happy as two owls in a hole, two toads under a tree stump; or any other queer two poking creatures that we let live, after the fashion of their black hearts, only Ba is fat and rosy: yes, indeed! Florence is empty and pleasant. Goodbye, therefore, till next year — shall it not be then we meet? God bless you.

R. B.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: February 22, [1848].

Your letter, my dearest friend, which was written, a part at least, before Christmas, came lingering in long after the new year had seen out its matins. Oh, I had wondered so, and wished so over the long silence. My fault, perhaps, in a measure, for I know how silent *I* was before. Yes, and you tell me of your having been unwell (bad news), and of your dear Flush's death, which made me sorrowful for you, as I might reasonably be. And now tell me more. Have you a successor to him? Once you told me that one of the race was in training, but as you say nothing now I am all in a doubt. Let me hear everything. If I had been you, I think I should have preferred some quite other kind of dog, as the unlikeness of a likeness would be apt to bring a pain to me; but people can't reason about feelings, and feelings are like the colour of eyes, not the same in different faces, however general may be the proximity of noses. . . . The great subject with *everybody* just now is

the new hope of Italy, and the liberal constitution, given nobly by our good, excellent Grand Duke, whose praise is in all the houses, streets, and piazzas. The other evening, the evening after the gift, he went privately to the opera, was recognised, and in a burst of triumph and a glory of waxen torches was brought back to the Pitti by the people. I was undressing to go to bed, had my hair down over my shoulders under Wilson's ministry, when Robert called me to look out of the window and see. Through the dark night a great flock of stars seemed sweeping up the piazza, but not in silence, nor with very heavenly noises. The '*Evvivas*' were deafening. So glad I was. *I, too*, stood at the window and clapped my hands. If ever Grand Duke deserved benediction this Duke does. We hear that he was quite moved, overpowered, and wept like a child. Nevertheless the most of Italy is under the cloud, and God knows how all may end as the thunder ripens. Now I mustn't, I suppose, write politics. Our plans about England are afloat. Impossible to know what we shall do, but if not this summer, the summer after *must* help us to the sight of some beloved faces. It will be a midsummer dream, and we shall return to winter in Italy. My Flush is as well as ever, and perhaps gayer than ever I knew him. He runs out in the piazza whenever he pleases, and plays with the dogs when they are pretty enough, and wags his tail at the sentinels and civic guard, and takes the Grand Duke as a sort of neighbour of his, whom it is proper enough to patronise, but who has considerably less inherent merit and dignity than the spotted spaniel in the alley to the left. We have been reading over again 'André' and 'Leone Leoni,'[1] and Robert is in an enthusiasm about the first. Happy person, you are, to get so at new books. Blessed is the man who reads Balzac, or even Dumas. I have got to admire Dumas doubly since that fight and scramble for his

[1] Novels by George Sand.

brains in Paris. Now do think of me and love me, and let me be as ever your affectionate

BA.

Robert's regards always. Say particularly how you are, and may God bless you, dearest Miss Mitford, and make you happy.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: April 15, [1848].

. . . My Flush has recovered his beauty, and is in more vivacious spirits than I remember to have seen him. Still, the days come when he will have no pleasure and plenty of fleas, poor dog, for Savonarola's martyrdom here in Florence is scarcely worse than Flush's in the summer. Which doesn't prevent his enjoying the spring, though, and just now, when, by medical command, I drive out two hours every day, his delight is to occupy the seat in the carriage opposite to Robert and me, and look disdainfully on all the little dogs who walk afoot. We drive day by day through the lovely Cascine (where the trees have finished and spread their webs of full greenery, undimmed by the sun yet), first sweeping through the city, past such a window where Bianca Capello looked out to see the Duke go by,[1] and past such a door where Lapo stood, and past the famous stone where Dante drew his chair out to sit.[2] Strange, to have all that old-world life about us, and the blue sky so bright besides, and ever so much talk on our lips about the

[1] See Browning's *The Statue and the Bust.*

[2] 'the stone
Called Dante's — a plain flat stone scarce discerned
From others in the pavement — whereupon
He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it burned.'
Casa Guidi Windows, part i.

new French revolution, and the King of Prussia's cunning, and the fuss in Germany and elsewhere. Not to speak of our own particular troubles and triumphs in Lombardy close by. The English are flying from Florence, by the way, in a helter skelter, just as they always do fly, except (to do them justice) on a field of battle. The family Englishman is a dreadful coward, be it admitted frankly. See how they run from France, even to my dear excellent Uncle Hedley, who has too many little girls in his household to stay longer at Tours. Oh, I don't *blame* him exactly. I only wish that he had waited a little longer, the time necessary for being quite reassured. He has great stakes in the country — a house at Tours and in Paris, and twenty thousand pounds in the Rouen railway. But Florence will fall upon her feet we may all be certain, let the worst happen that can. Meanwhile, republicans as I and my husband are by profession, we very anxiously, anxiously even to pain, look on the work being attempted and done just now by the theorists in Paris; far from half approving of it we are, and far from being absolutely confident of the durability of the other half. Tell me what you think, and if you are not anxious too. As to communism, surely the practical part of *that*, the only not dangerous part, is attainable simply by the consent of individuals who may try the experiment of associating their families in order to the cheaper employment of the means of life, and successfully in many cases. But make a government scheme of *even so much*, and you seem to trench on the individual liberty. All such patriarchal planning in a government issues naturally into absolutism, and is adapted to states of society more or less barbaric. Liberty and civilisation when married together lawfully rather evolve individuality than tend to generalisation. Is this not true? I fear, I fear that mad theories promising the impossible may, in turn, make the people mad. Louis Blanc knows not what he says. Have I not mentioned to you a very gifted

woman, a sculptress, Mademoiselle de Fauveau, who lives in Florence with her mother practising her profession, an exile from France, in consequence of their royalist opinions and participation in the Vendée struggle, some sixteen or fifteen years? On that occasion she was mistaken for and allowed herself to be arrested as Madame de la Roche Jacquelin; therefore she has justified, by suffering in the cause, her passionate attachment to it. A most interesting person she is; she called upon us a short time ago and interested us much. And Mrs. Jameson would tell you that her celebrity in her art is not comparative 'for a woman,' but that, since Benvenuto Cellini, more beautiful works of the kind have not been accomplished. An exquisite fountain she has lately done for the Emperor of Russia. She has workmen under her, and is as 'professional' in every respect as if neither woman nor noble. At the first throb of this revolution of course she dreamt the impossible about that dear 'Henri Cinq,' who is as much out of the question as Henri Quatre himself; and now it ends with the 'French Legation' coming to settle in the house precisely opposite to hers, with a hideous sign-painting appended of the Gallic cock on one leg and at full crow inscribed, 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.' This, and the death of her favorite dog, whom, after seventeen years' affection, she was forced to have destroyed on account of a combination of diseases, has quite saddened the sculptress. When she came to see us I observed that after so long a residence at Florence she must regard it as a second country. 'Ah non!' (the answer was) 'il n'y a pas de seconde patrie.' What you tell me of 'Jane Eyre' makes me long to see the book. I may long, I fancy. It is dismal to have to disappoint my dearest sisters, who hoped for me in England this summer, but our English visit *must* be for next summer instead; there seems too much against it just now. The drawback of Italy is the distance from England. If it were but as near as Paris, for instance, why in that case we

should settle here at once, I do think, the conveniences and luxuries of life are of such incredible cheapness, the climate so divine, and the way of things altogether so serene and suited to our tastes and instincts. But to give up England and the *English*, the dear, dearest treasure of English love, is impossible, so we just linger and linger. The Boyles go to England from the press of panic, Lady Boyle being old and infirm. Ah, but your talking friend would interest you, and you might accept the talk in infinitesimal doses, you know. Lamartine has surely acted down the fallacy of the impractical tendencies of imaginative men. I am full of France just now. Are you all prepared for an outbreak in Ireland? I hope so. My husband has the second edition of his collected poems[1] in the press by this time, by grace of Chapman and Hall, who accept all risks. You speak of Tennyson's vexation about the reception of the 'Princess.' Why did Mr. Harness and others, who 'never could understand' his former divine works, praise this in manuscript till the poet's hope grew to the height of his ambition? Strangely unfortunate. We have not read it yet. I hear that Tennyson had the other day everything packed for Italy, then turned his face toward Ireland, and went there. Oh, for a talk with you. But this is a sort of talk, isn't it? Accept my husband's regards. As to my love, I throw it to you over the [sea] with both hands. God bless you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To John Kenyon

[Florence:] May 1, [1848].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — Surely it is quite wrong that we three, Robert, you, and I, should be satisfied with

[1] This edition, published in 1849 in two volumes, contained only *Paracelsus* and the plays and poems of the *Bells and Pomegranates* series.

writing little dry notes, as short as so many proclamations, and those of the order of your anti-Chartist magistracy, 'Whereas certain evil disposed persons &c. &c.,' instead of our anti-Austrian Grand duchy's 'O figli amati' (how characteristic of the north and the south, to be sure, is this contrast! Yet, after all, they might have managed it rather better in England!) — little dry notes brief and business-like as an anti-Chartist proclamation! And, indeed, two of us are by no means satisfied, whatever the third may be. The other day we were looking over some of the dear delightful letters you used to write to us. Real letters those were, and not little dry notes at all. Robert said, 'When I write to dear Mr. Kenyon I really do feel overcome by the sense of what I owe to him, and so, as it is beyond words to say, why generally I say as little as possible of anything, keeping myself to matters of business.' An alternative very objectionable, I told him; for to have 'a dumb devil' from ever such grateful and sentimental reasons, when the Alps stand betwixt friends, is damnatory in the extreme. Then, as *you* are not 'too grateful' to *us*, why don't *you* write? Pray do, my dear friend. Let us all write as we used to do. And to make sure of it, I begin.

Since I ended last the world has turned over on its other side, in order, one must hope, to some happy change in the dream. Our friend, Miss Bayley, in that very kind letter which has just reached me and shall be answered directly (will you tell her with my thankful love?), asks if Robert and I are communists, and then half draws back her question into a discreet reflection that *I*, at least, was never much celebrated for acumen on political economy. Most true indeed! And therefore, and on that very ground, is it not the more creditable to me that I don't set up for a communist immediately? In proportion to the ignorance might be the stringency of the embrace of 'la vérité sociale:' so I claim a little credit that it isn't. For really we are not

communists, farther than to admit the wisdom of voluntary association in matters of material life among the poorer classes. And to legislate even on such points seems as objectionable as possible; all intermeddlings of government with domesticities, from Lacedæmon to Peru, were and must be objectionable; and of the growth of absolutism, let us theorise as we choose. I would have the government educate the people absolutely, and *then* give room for the individual to develop himself into life freely. Nothing can be more hateful to me than this communist idea of quenching individualities in the mass. As if the hope of the world did not always consist in the eliciting of the individual man from the background of the masses, in the evolvement of individual genius, virtue, magnanimity. Do you know how I love France and the French? Robert laughs at me for the mania of it, or used to laugh long before this revolution. When I was a prisoner, my other mania for imaginative literature used to be ministered to through the prison bars by Balzac, George Sand, and the like immortal improprieties. They kept the colour in my life to some degree and did good service in their time to me, I can assure you, though in dear discreet England women oughtn't to confess to such reading, I believe, or you told me so yourself one day. Well, but through reading the books I grew to love France, in a mania too; and the interest, which all must feel in the late occurrences there, has been with me, and is, quite painful. I read the newspapers as I never did in my life, and hope and fear in paroxysms, yes, and am guilty of thinking far more of Paris than of Lombardy itself, and try to understand financial difficulties and social theories with the best will in the world; much as Flush tries to understand me when I tell him that barking and jumping may be unseasonable things. Both of us open our eyes a good deal, but the comprehension is questionable after all. What, however, I do seem least of all to comprehend, is your hymn of triumph in

England, just because you have a lower ideal of liberty than the French people have. See if in Louis Philippe's time France was not in many respects more advanced than England is now, property better divided, hereditary privilege abolished! Are we to blow with the trumpet because we respect the ruts while everywhere else they are mending the roads? I do not comprehend. As to the Chartists, it is only a pity in my mind that you have not more of them. That's their fault. Mine, you will say, is being pert about politics when you would rather have anything else in a letter from Italy. You have heard of my illness, and will have been sorry for me, I am certain; but with blessings edging me round, I need not catch at a thistle in the hedge to make a 'sorrowful complaignte' of. Our plans have floated round and round, in and out of all the bays and creeks of the Happy Islands. . . .

Meanwhile here we are — and when do you mean to come to see us, pray? Mind, I hold by the skirts of the vision for next winter. Why, surely *you* won't talk of 'disturbances' and 'revolutions,' and the like disloyal reasons which send our brave countrymen flying on all sides, as if every separate individual expected to be bombarded *per se*. Now, mind you come; dear dear Mr. Kenyon, how delighted past expression we should be to see you! Ah, do you fancy that I have no regret for our delightful gossips? If I have the feeling I told you of for Balzac and George Sand, what must I have for *you?* Now come, and let us see you! And still sooner, if you please, write to us — and write of yourself and in detail — and tell us particularly, first if the winter has left no sign of a cough with you, and next, what you mean by something which suggests to my fancy that you have a book in the course of printing. Is that true? Tell me all about it — *all!* Who can be interested, pray, if *I* am not? For your and Mr. Chorley's and Mr. Forster's kind dealings with Robert's poems I thank you gratefully; and as a third volume can bring up

the rear quickly in the case of success, I make no wailing for my 'Luria,' however dear it may be.[1]

You are not to fancy that I am unwell now. On the contrary, I am nearly as strong as ever, and go out in the carriage for two hours every day, besides a little walk sometimes.

Not a word more to-day. Write — do — and you shall hear from us at length. Robert sends his own love, I suppose. We both love you from our hearts.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

(who can't read over, and writes in such a hurry !)

It was about this time, as appears from the following letter, that the Brownings finally anchored themselves in Florence by taking an unfurnished suite of rooms in the Palazzo Guidi, and making there a home for themselves. Here, in the Via Maggio, almost opposite the Pitti Palace, and within easy distance of the Ponte Vecchio, is the dwelling known to all lovers of English poetry as Casa Guidi, and bearing now upon its walls the name of the English poetess whose life and writings formed, in the graceful words of the Italian poet, 'a golden ring between Italy and England.' Whatever might be their migrations — and they were many, especially in later years — Casa Guidi was henceforth their home.[2]

To Miss Mitford

May 28, 1848.

. . . And now I must tell you what we have done since I wrote last, little thinking of doing so. You see our problem was to get to England as much in our summers as possible, the expense of the intermediate journeys making it difficult of solution. On examination of the whole case, it appeared manifest that we were throwing money into the

[1] Apparently it had been proposed to omit *Luria* from the new edition; but, if so, the intention was not carried out.

[2] It will interest many readers to know that Casa Guidi is now the property of Mr. R. Barrett Browning.

Arno by our way of taking furnished rooms, while to take an apartment and furnish it would leave us a clear return of the *furniture* at the end of the first year in exchange for our outlay, and of all but a free residence afterwards, with the privilege of making it productive by under-letting at our good pleasure. For instance, rooms we paid four guineas a month for, we could have the whole year unfurnished at ten or twelve — the cheapness of the furniture being besides something quite fabulous, especially at the present crisis. Laying which facts together, and seeing besides the all but necessity for us to reside abroad the colder part of every year, we leapt on our feet to the obvious conclusion you have before you, and though the temptation was too strong for us to adopt quite the cheapest ways of the cheap scheme, by the dense economy of preferring small rooms, &c. — though, in fact, we have really done it magnificently, and planted ourselves in the Guidi Palace, in the favorite suite of the last count (his arms are in scagliola on the floor of my bedroom); though we have six beautiful rooms and a kitchen, three of them quite palace rooms and opening on a terrace; and though such furniture as comes by slow degrees into them is antique and worthy of the place — we yet shall have saved money by the close of this year; while for next year, see! we shall let our apartment to go to England, drawing from it the product of '*furnished rooms*.' Now I tell you all this lest you hear dreadful rumours of our having forsaken our native land, venerable institutions and all — whereas we remember it so well (it's a dear land in many senses) that we have done this thing chiefly in order to make sure of being able to get back comfortably. My friends the Martins used to have a home in Normandy, and carry the key of it in their pocket, going there just every year at fishing time. A corner in Florence may pass for a still better thing, even without the terrace, and the orange trees and camellias we mean to throng it with. A stone's throw, too, it is from

the Pitti; and really, in my present mind, I would scarcely exchange with the Grand Duke himself. Our rooms are delightful, and Flush agrees to praise them, all but the terrace, which he considers full of risks. There he will go only by himself or with me. To walk there three at a time may involve a pushing off into the street, of which he has a lively sense in his imagination. By the bye, as to street we have no spectators at windows — just the grey wall of a church, called San Felice for good omen. Now have you heard enough of us? What I claimed first, in way of privilege, was a spring sofa to loll upon, and a supply of rain water to wash in; and you should see what a picturesque oil jar they have given us for the latter purpose. It would just hold the captain of the forty thieves. As to the chairs and tables, I yield the more especial interest in them to Robert. Only, you would laugh to hear us correct one another sometimes. 'Dear, you get too many drawers and not enough washing stands. Pray don't let us have any more drawers, when we've nothing more to put into them.' There was no division on the necessity of having six spoons — some questions pass themselves. Now do write to me, and be as egotistical. At last we have caught sight of Tennyson's 'Princess,' and I may or must profess to be a good deal disappointed. What woman will tell the great poet that Mary Wollstonecraft herself never dreamt of setting up collegiate states, proctordoms, and the rest, which is a worn-out plaything in the hands of one sex already, and need not be *transferred* in order to be proved ridiculous? As for the poetry, beautiful in some parts, he never seems to me to come up to his own highest mark, in the rhythm especially. The old blank verse of Tennyson was a divine thing, but this new — mounted for certain critics — may please *them* perhaps better then it pleases *me*. Still, the man is Tennyson, take him for all and all, and I never shall forgive whatever princesses of my sex may have ill treated him. . . . Well, poor France! How I should

like to hear you talk of poor France; how I hope that you are able to hope for her. Oh, this absurdity of communism and mythological fête-ism! where can it end? They had better have kept Louis Philippe after all, if they are no more practical. Your Madame must be insufferable indeed, seeing that her knowledge of these subjects and men did not make her sufferable to you. My curiosity never is exhausted. What I hold is that the French have a higher ideal than we, and that all this clambering, leaping, struggling of indefinite awkwardness simply proves it. But *success in the republic* is different still. I fear for them. My uncle and his family are safe at Tunbridge Wells, my aunt longing to be able to get back again. For those who are still nearer to me, I have no heart to speak of *them*, loving them as I do and must to the end, whatever that end may be; but my dearest sisters write often to me — never let me miss their affection. I am quite well again, and strong, and Robert and I go out after tea in a wandering walk to sit in the Loggia and look at the Perseus, or, better still, at the divine sunsets on the Arno, turning it to pure gold under the bridges. After more than twenty months of marriage, we are happier than ever — I may say *we*. Italy will regenerate herself in all senses, I hope and believe. In Florence we are very quiet, and the English fly in proportion. N.B. — *Always* first fly the majors and gallant captains, unless there's a general. How I should like to see dear Mr. Horne's poem! *He's* bold, at least — yes, and has a great heart to be bold with. A cloud has fallen on me some few weeks ago, in the illness and death of my dear friend Mr. Boyd,[1] but he did not suffer, and is not to be mourned by those without hope [*sic*]. Still, it has been a cloud. May God bless you, my beloved friend. Write soon, and of yourself, to your ever affectionate

BA.

My husband's regards go to you, of course.

[1] Mr. Boyd died on May 10, 1848.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about June 1848.]

My dearest Sarianna, — At last, you see, I give sign of life. The *love*, I hope you believed in without sign or symbol; and even for the rest, Robert promised to answer for me like godfather or godmother, and bear the consequence of my sins. . . .

We are a little uneasy just now as to whether you will be overjoyed or *under*joyed by our new scheme of taking an unfurnished apartment. It would spoil all, for instance, if your dear mother seemed disappointed — vexed — in the least degree. And I can understand how, to persons at a distance and of course unable to understand the whole circumstances of the case, the fact of an apartment taken and furnished may seem to involve some dreadful giving up for ever and ever of country and family — which would be as dreadful to us as to you! How could we give you up, do you think, when we love you more and more? Oh no. If Robert has succeeded in making clear the subject to you, you will all perceive, just as *we know*, that we have simply thus solved the problem of making our small income carry us to England, not only next summer, but many a summer after. We should like to give every summer to dear England, and hide away from the cold only when it comes. By our scheme we shall have saved money even at the end of the present year; while for afterward, here's a residence — that is, a *pied à terre* — in Italy, all but free when we wish to use it; and when we care to let it, producing eight or ten pounds a month in help of travelling expenses. It's the best investment for Mr. Moxon's money we could have looked the world over for. So the learned tell us; and after all, you know, we only pay in the proportion of your working classes in the Pancras building contrived for them by the philanthropy of your Southwood Smiths. I do wish

you could see what rooms we have, what ceilings, what height and breadth, what a double terrace for orange trees; how cool, how likely to be warm, how perfect every way! Robert leaned once to a ground floor in the Frescobaldi Palace, being bewitched by a garden full of camellias, and a little pond of gold and silver fish; but while he saw the fish I saw the mosquitos in clouds, such an apocalypse of them as has not yet been visible to me in all Florence, and I dread mosquitos more than Austrians; and he, in his unspeakable goodness, deferred to my fear in a moment and gave up the camellias without one look behind. A heavy conscience I should have if it were not that the camellia garden was certainly less private than our terrace here, where we can have camellias also if we please. How pretty and pleasant your cottage at Windsor must be! We had a long *muse* over your father's sketch of it, and set faces at the windows. That the dear invalid is better for the change must have brightened it, too, to her companions, and the very sound of a 'forest' is something peculiarly delightful and untried to me. I know hills well and of the sea too much; but now I want forests, or quite, quite mountains, such as you have not in England.

Robert says that if 'Blackwood' likes to print a poem of mine and send you the proofs, you will be so very good as to like to correct them. To me it seems too much to ask, when you have work for him to do beside. Will it be too much, or is nothing so to your kindness? I would ask my *other* sisters, who would gladly, dear things, do it for me; but I have misgivings through their being so entirely unaccustomed to occupations of the sort, or any critical reading of poetry of any sort. Robert is quite well and in the best spirits, and has the headache now only very occasionally. I am as well as he, having quite recovered my strength and power of walking. So we wander to the bridge of Trinità every evening after tea to see the sunset on the Arno. May God bless you all! Give my true love to your father and mother, and my loving thanks to yourself

for that last stitch in the stool. How good you are, Sarianna, to your ever affectionate sister

Ba.

Always remind your dear mother that we are no more *bound* here than when in furnished lodgings. It is a mere name.

To Mrs. Martin

Palazzo Guidi: June 20, [1848].

My dearest Mrs. Martin,— Now I am going to answer your letter, which I all but lost, and got ever so many days beyond the right day, because you directed it to Mrs. *William* Browning. Pray remember *Robert Browning* for the future, in right descent from *Robert Brunnyng*,[1] the first English poet. Mrs. Jameson says, 'It's ominous of the actual Robert's being the *last* English poet;' a saying which I give you to remember us by, rejecting the omen. . . . We have grown to be Florentine citizens, as perhaps you have heard. Health and means both forbade our settlement in England; and the journey backwards and forwards being another sort of expense, and very necessary with our ties and affections, we had to think how to live here, when we were here, at the cheapest. The difference between taking a furnished apartment and an unfurnished one is something immense. For our furnished rooms we have had always to pay some four guineas a month; and unfurnished rooms of equal pretension we could have for twelve a year, and the furniture (out and out) for fifty pounds. This calculation, together with the consideration that we could let our apartment whenever we travelled and receive back the whole cost, could not choose, of course, but determine us. On coming to the point, however, we grew ambitious, and preferred giving five-and-twenty guineas for a noble suite of

[1] Otherwise known as Robert Mannyng, or Robert de Brunne, author of the *Handlyng Synne* and a *Chronicle of England*. He flourished about 1288–1338.

rooms in the Palazzo Guidi, a stone's throw from the Pitti, and furnishing them after our own taste rather than after our economy, the economy having a legitimate share of respect notwithstanding; and the satisfactory thing being that the whole expense of this furnishing — rococo chairs, spring sofas, carved bookcases, satin from cardinals' beds, and the rest — is covered by the proceeds of our books during the last two winters. This is satisfying, isn't it? We shall stand safe within the borders of our narrow income even this year, and next year comes the harvest! We shall go to England in the spring, and return *home* to Italy. Do you understand? Mr. Kenyon, our friend and counsellor, writes to applaud — such prudence was never known before among poets. Then we have a plan, that when the summer (this summer) grows too hot, we shall just take up our carpet-bag and Wilson and plunge into the mountains in search of the monasteries beyond Vallombrosa, from Arezzo go to St. Sepolchro in the Apennines, and thence to Fano on the seashore, making a round back perhaps (after seeing the great fair at Sinigaglia) to Ravenna and Bologna home. As to Rome, our plan is to give up Rome next winter, seeing that we *must* go to England in the spring. I *must* see my dearest sisters and whoever else dear will see me, and Robert *must* see his family beside; and going to Rome will take us too far from the route and cost too much; and then we are not inclined to give the first-fruits of our new apartment to strangers if we could let it ever so easily this year. You can't think how well the rooms look already; you must come and see them, you and dear Mr. Martin. Three immense rooms we have, and a fourth small one for a book room and winter room — windows opening on a little terrace, eight windows to the south; two good bedrooms behind, with a smaller terrace, and kitchen, &c., all on a first floor and Count Guidi's favourite suite. The Guidi were connected by marriage with the Ugolino of Pisa, Dante's Ugolino, only we shun all traditions of the Tower of

Famine, and promise to give you excellent coffee whenever you will come to give us the opportunity. We shall have vines and myrtles and orange trees on the terrace, and I shall have a watering-pot and garden just as you do, though it must be on the bricks instead of the ground. For temperature, the stoves are said to be very effective in the winter, and in the summer we are cool and airy; the advantage of these thick-walled palazzos is coolness in summer and warmth in winter. I am very well and quite strong again, or rather, stronger than ever, and able to walk as far as Cellini's Perseus in the moonlight evenings, on the other side of the Arno. Oh, that Arno in the sunset, with the moon and evening star standing by, how divine it is! . . .

Think of me as ever your most affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 4, [1848].

It does grieve me, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, to hear of the suffering which has fallen upon you! Oh, rheumatism or not, whatever the name may be, do take care, do consider, and turn your dear face toward the seaside; somewhere where you can have warm sea bathing and sea air, and be able to associate the word 'a drive' not with mad ponies, but the mildest of donkeys, on a flat sand. The good it would do you is incalculable, I am certain; it is precisely a case for change of air, with quiet. . . .

As for when you come to Florence, we won't have 'a pony carriage between us,' if you please, because we may have a carriage and a pair of horses and a coachman, and pay as little as for the pony-chair in England. For three hundred a year one may live much like the Grand Duchess, and go to the opera in the evening at fivepence-halfpenny inclusive. Indeed, poor people should have their patriotism tenderly dealt with, when, after certain experiments, they

decide on living upon the whole on the Continent. The differences are past belief, beyond expectation, and when the sunshine is thrown in, the head turns at once, and you fall straight into absenteeism. Ah, for the 'long chats' and the 'having England at one another's fireside!' You talk of delightful things indeed. We are very quiet, politically speaking, and though we hear now and then of melancholy mothers who have to part with their sons for Lombardy,[1] and though there are processions for the blessing of flags and an occasional firing of guns for a victory, or a cry in the streets, 'Notizie della guerra — leggete, signori;' this is all we know of Radetsky in Florence; while, for civil politics, the meeting of the senate took place a few days since to the satisfaction of everybody, and the Grand Duke's speech was generally admired. The elections have returned moderate men, and many land-proprietors, and Robert, who went out to see the procession of members, was struck by the grave thoughtful faces and the dignity of expression. We are going some day to hear the debates, but it has pleased their signoria to fix upon twelve (noon) for meeting, and really I do not dare to go out in the sun. The hour is sufficiently conclusive against dangerous enthusiasm. Poor France, poor France! News of the dreadful massacre at Paris just reaches us, and the letters and newspapers not arriving to-day, everybody fears a continuation of the crisis. How is it to end? Who 'despairs of the republic?' Why, *I* do! I fear, I fear, that it cannot stand in France, and you seem to have not much more hope. My husband has a little, with melancholy intermediate prospects; but my own belief is that the people have had enough of democratic institutions and will be impatient for a kingship anew. Whom

[1] The insurrection of Lombardy against Austrian rule had taken place in March, and was immediately followed by war between Sardinia and Austria, in which the Italians gained some initial successes. Fighting continued through the summer, and was temporarily closed by an armistice in August.

will they have? How did you feel when the cry was raised, 'Vive l'Empereur'? Only Prince Napoleon is a Napoleon cut out in paper after all. The Prince de Joinville is said to be very popular. It makes me giddy to think of the awful precipices which surround France — to think, too, that the great danger is on the question of *property*, which is perhaps divided there more justly than in any other country of Europe. Lamartine has comprehended nothing, that is clear, even if his amount of energy had been effectual. . . . Yes, do send me the list of Balzac, *after* 'Les Misères de la Vie Conjugale,' I mean. I left him in the midst of 'La Femme de Soixante Ans,' who seemed on the point of turning the heads of all 'la jeunesse' around her; and, after all, she did not strike me as so charming. But Balzac charms me, let him write what he will; he's an inspired man. Tell me, too, exactly what Sue has done after 'Martin.' I read only one volume of 'Martin.' And did poor Soulié finish his 'Dramas'? And after 'Lucretia' what did George Sand write? When Robert and I are ambitious, we talk of buying Balzac in full some day, to put him up in our book-case from the convent, if the carved-wood angels, infants and serpents, should not finish mouldering away in horror at the touch of him. But I fear it will rather be an expensive purchase, even here. Would that he gave up the drama, for which, as you observe, he has no faculty whatever. In fact, the faculty he has is the very reverse of the dramatic, ordinarily understood. . . . Dearest Mr. Kenyon is called quite well and delightful by the whole world, though he suffered from cough in the winter; and he is bringing out a new book of poems, a 'Day at Tivoli,' and others; and he talks energetically of coming to Florence this autumn. Also, we have hopes of Mr. Chorley. I congratulate you on the going away of Madame. Coming and going bring very various associations in this life of ours. Why, if *you* were to come we should appreciate our fortune, and you should have my particular chair, which Robert calls mine

because I like sitting in a cloud; it's so sybaritically soft a chair. Now I love you for the kind words you say of *him*, who deserves the best words of the best women and men, wherever spoken! Yes, indeed, I am happy. Otherwise, I should have a stone where the heart is, and sink by the weight of it. You must have faith in me, for I never can make you thoroughly to understand what he is, of himself, and to me — the noblest and perfectest of human beings. After a year and ten months' absolute soul-to-soul intercourse and union, I have to look higher still for my first ideal. You won't blame me for bad taste that I say these things, for can I help it, when I am writing my heart to you? It is a heart which runs over very often with a grateful joy for a most peculiar destiny, even in the midst of some bitter drawbacks which I need not allude to farther. . . .

May God bless you continually, even as I am

Your affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

Palazzo Guidi: July 15, [1848].

Now at last, my very dear friend, I am writing to you, and the reproach you sent to me in your letter shall not be driven inwardly any more by my self-reproaches. Wasn't it your fault after all, a little, that we did not hear one another's voice oftener? You are *so long* in writing. Then I have been putting off and putting off my letter to you, just because I wanted to make a full letter of it; and Robert always says that it's the bane of a correspondence to make a full letter a condition of writing at all. But so much I had to tell you! while the mere outline of facts you had from others, I knew. Which is just said that you may forgive us both, and believe that we think of you and love you, yes, and talk of you, even when we don't write to you, and that we shall write to you for the future more regularly, indeed. Your letter, notwithstanding its reproach, was

very welcome and very kind, only you must be fagged with the book, and saddened by Lady Byron's state of health, and anxious about Gerardine perhaps. The best of all was the prospect you hold out to us of coming to Italy this year. Do, do come. Delighted we shall be to see you in Florence, and wise it will be in you to cast behind your back both the fear of Radetsky and as much English care as may be. Now, would it not do infinite good to Lady Byron if you could carry her with you into the sun? Surely it would do her great good; the change, the calm, the atmosphere of beauty and brightness, which harmonises so wonderfully with every shade of human feeling. Florence just now, and thanks to the panic, is tolerably *clean* of the English — you scarcely see an English face anywhere — and perhaps this was a circumstance that helped to give Robert courage to take our apartment here and 'settle down.' You were surprised at so decided a step I dare say, and, I believe, though too considerate to say it in your letter, you have wondered in your thoughts at our fixing at Florence instead of Rome, and without seeing more of Italy before the finality of making a choice. But observe, Florence is wonderfully cheap, one lives here for just nothing; and the convenience in respect to England, letters, and the facility of letting our house in our absence, is incomparable altogether. At Rome a house would be habitable only half the year, and the distance and the expense are objections at the first sight of the subject. . . . Altogether, if I could but get a supply of French books, turning the cock easily, it would be perfect; but as to *anything* new in the book way, Vieusseux seems to have made a vow against it, and poor Robert comes and goes in a state of desperation between me and the bookseller ('But what *can* I do, Ba?'), and only brings news of some pitiful revolution or other which promises a full flush of republican virtues and falls off into the fleur de lis as usual. Think of our not having read 'Lucretia' yet — George Sand's. And Balzac is six or seven works deep from

us; but these are evils to be borne. We live on just in the same way, having very few visitors, and receiving them in the quietest of hospitalities. Mr. Ware, the American, who wrote the 'Letters from Palmyra,' and is a delightful, earnest, simple person, comes to have coffee with us once or twice a week, and very much we like him. Mr. Hillard, another cultivated American friend of ours, you have in London, and we should gladly have kept longer. Mr. Powers does not spend himself much upon visiting, which is quite right, but we do hope to see a good deal of Mademoiselle de Fauveau. Robert exceedingly admires her. As to Italian society, one may as well take to longing for the evening star, for it seems quite as inaccessible; and indeed, of society of any sort, we have not much, nor wish for it, nor miss it. Dearest friend, if I could open my heart to you in all seriousness, you would see nothing there but a sort of enduring wonder of happiness — yes, and some gratitude, I do hope, besides. Could everything be well in England, I should only have to melt out of the body at once in the joy and the glow of it. Happier and happier I have been, month after month; and when I hear *him* talk of being happy too, my very soul seems to swim round with feelings which cannot be spoken. But I tell you a little, because I owe the telling to you, and also that you may set down in your philosophy the possibility of book-making creatures living happily together. I admit, though, to begin (or end), that my husband is an exceptional human being, and that it wouldn't be just to measure another by him. We are planning a great deal of enjoyment in this 'going to the fair' at Sinigaglia, meaning to go by Arezzo and San Sepolchro, and Urbino, to Fano, where we shall pitch our tent for the benefit, as Robert says, of the sea air and the oysters. Fano is very habitable, and we may get to Pesaro and the footsteps of Castiglione's 'courtier,' to say nothing of Bernardo Tasso; and Ancona beckons from the other side of Sinigaglia, and Loretto beside, only we shall

have to restrain our flights a little. The passage of the Apennine is said to be magnificent, and, altogether, surely it must be delightful; and we take only two carpet bags — not to be weighed down by 'impedimenta,' and have our own home, left in charge of the porter, to return to at last. I am very well and shall be better for the change, though Robert is dreadfully afraid, as usual, that I shall fall to pieces at the first motion. . . .

May God bless you! . .

Ever I am your affectionate

Ba.

Write to Florence as usual — Poste Restante. You will hear how we are in great hopes of dear Mr. Kenyon.

Dear Aunt Nina, — Only a word in all the hurry of setting off. We love you as you love us, and are pretty nearly as happy as you would have us. All love and prosperity to dear Geddie, too; what do you say of 'Landor,' and my not sending it to Forster or somebody? *Che che* (as the Tuscans exclaim), *who* was it promised to call at my people's, who would have tendered it forthwith? I will see about it as it is. Goodbye, dearest aunt, and let no revolution disturb your good will to Ba and

R. B.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: August 24, 1848.

Ever dearest Miss Mitford, — It's great comfort to have your letter; for as it came more lingeringly than usual, I had time to be a little anxious, and even my husband has confessed since that he thought what he would not say aloud for fear of paining me, as to the probability of your being less well than usual. Your letters come so regularly to the hour, you see, that when it strikes without them, we ask why. Thank God, you are better after all, and reviving

in spirits, as I saw at the first glance before the words said it clearly. . . .

As for ourselves, we have scarcely done so well, yet well; having enjoyed a great deal in spite of drawbacks. Murray, the traitor, sent us to Fano as a 'delightful summer residence for an English family,' and we found it uninhabitable from the heat, vegetation scorched with paleness, the very air swooning in the sun, and the gloomy looks of the inhabitants sufficiently corroborative of their words, that no drop of rain or dew ever falls there during the summer. A 'circulating library' 'which doesn't give out books,' and 'a refined and intellectual Italian society' (I quote Murray for that phrase) which 'never reads a book through' (I quote Mrs. Wiseman, Dr. Wiseman's mother, who has lived in Fano seven years), complete the advantages of the place, yet the churches are beautiful, and a divine picture of Guercino's is worth going all that way to see.[1] By a happy accident we fell in with Mrs. Wiseman, who, having married her daughter to Count Gabrielli with ancestral possessions in Fano, has lived on there from year to year, in a state of permanent moaning as far as I could apprehend. She is a very intelligent and vivacious person, and having been used to the best French society, bears but ill this exile from the common civilities of life. I wish Dr. Wiseman, of whose childhood and manhood she spoke with touching pride, would ask her to minister to the domestic rites of his

[1] 'Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!) that little child to pray
Holding his little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, with his own head turned away,
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

'We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content,
My angel with me too.'

bishop's palace in Westminster; there would be no hesitation, I fancy, in her acceptance of the invitation. Agreeable as she and her daughter were, however, we fled from Fano after three days, and, finding ourselves cheated out of our dream of summer coolness, resolved on substituting for it what the Italians call 'un bel giro.' So we went to Ancona, a striking sea city, holding up against the brown rocks and elbowing out the purple tides, beautiful to look upon. An exfoliation of the rock itself, you would call the houses that seem to grow there, so identical is the colour and character. I should like to visit Ancona again when there is a little air and shadow; we stayed a week as it was, living upon fish and cold water. Water, water, was the cry all day long, and really you should have seen me (or you should not have seen me) lying on the sofa, and demoralised out of all sense of female vanity, not to say decency, with dishevelled hair at full length, and 'sans gown, sans stays, sans shoes, sans everything,' except a petticoat and white dressing wrapper. I said something feebly once about the waiter; but I don't think I meant it for earnest, for when Robert said, 'Oh, don't mind, dear,' certainly I didn't mind in the least. People *don't*, I suppose, when they are in ovens, or in exhausted receivers. Never before did I guess what heat was — that's sure. We went to Loreto for a day, back through Ancona, Sinigaglia (oh, I forgot to tell you, there was no fair this year at Sinigaglia; Italy will be content, I suppose, with selling her honour), Fano, Pesaro, Rimini to Ravenna, back again over the Apennines from Forli. A 'bel giro,' wasn't it? Ravenna, where Robert positively wanted to go to live once, has itself put an end to those yearnings. The churches are wonderful: holding an atmosphere of purple glory, and if one could live just in them, or in Dante's tomb — well, otherwise keep me from Ravenna. The very antiquity of the houses is whitewashed, and the marshes on all sides send up stenches new and old, till the hot air is sick with them. To get to the pine forest, which is exquisite,

you have to go a mile along the canal, the exhalations pursuing you step for step, and, what ruffled me more than all beside, we were not admitted into the house of Dante's tomb 'without an especial permission from the authorities.' Quite furious I was about this, and both of us too angry to think of applying: but we stood at the grated window and read the pathetic inscription as plainly as if we had touched the marble. We stood there between three and four in the morning, and then went straight on to Florence from that tomb of the exiled poet. Just what we should have done, had the circumstances been arranged in a dramatic intention. From Forli, the air grew pure and quick again: and the exquisite, almost visionary scenery of the Apennines, the wonderful variety of shape and colour, the sudden transitions and vital individuality of those mountains, the chestnut forests dropping by their own weight into the deep ravines, the rocks cloven and clawed by the living torrents, and the hills, hill above hill, piling up their grand existences as if they did it themselves, changing colour in the effort — of these things I cannot give you any idea, and if words could not, painting could not either. Indeed, the whole scenery of our journey, except when we approached the coast, was full of beauty. The first time we crossed the Apennine (near Borgo San Sepolcro) we did it by moonlight, and the flesh was weak, and one fell asleep, and saw things between sleep and wake, only the effects were grand and singular so, even though of course we lost much in the distinctness. Well, but you will understand from all this that we were delighted to get home — *I* was, I assure you. Florence seemed as cool as an oven after the fire; indeed, we called it quite cool, and I took possession of my own chair and put up my feet on the cushions and was charmed, both with having been so far and coming back so soon. Three weeks brought us home. Flush was a fellow traveller of course, and enjoyed it in the most obviously amusing manner. Never was there so good a dog in a carriage before his time! Think of

Flush, too! He has a supreme contempt for trees and hills or anything of that kind, and, in the intervals of natural scenery, he drew in his head from the window and didn't consider it worth looking at; but when the population thickened, and when a village or a town was to be passed through, then his eyes were starting out of his head with eagerness; he looked east, he looked west, you would conclude that he was taking notes or preparing them. His eagerness to get into the carriage first used to amuse the Italians. Ah, poor Italy! I am as mortified as an Italian ought to be. They have only the rhetoric of patriots and soldiers, I fear! Tuscany is to be spared forsooth, if she lies still, and here she lies, eating ices and keeping the feast of the Madonna. Perdoni! but she has a review in the Cascine besides, and a gallant show of some 'ten thousand men' they are said to have made of it — only don't think that I and Robert went out to see that sight. We should have sickened at it too much. An amiable, refined people, too, these Tuscans are, conciliating and affectionate. When you look out into the streets on feast days, you would take it for one great 'rout,' everybody appears dressed for a drawing room, and you can scarcely discern the least difference between class and class, from the Grand Duchess to the Donna di facenda; also there is no belying of the costume in the manners, the most gracious and graceful courtesy and gentleness being apparent in the thickest crowds. This is all attractive and delightful; but the people wants *stamina*, wants conscience, wants self-reverence. Dante's soul has died out of the land. Enough of this. As for France, I have 'despaired of the republic' for very long, but the nation is a great nation, and will right itself under some flag, white or red. Don't you think so? Thank you for the news of our authors, it is as 'the sound of a trumpet afar off,' and I am like the war-horse. Neglectful that I am, I forgot to tell you before that you heard quite rightly about Mr. Thackeray's wife, who is ill *so*. Since

your question, I had in gossip from England that the book 'Jane Eyre' was written by a governess in his house, and that the preface to the foreign edition refers to him in some marked way. We have not seen the book at all. But the first letter in which you mentioned your Oxford student caught us in the midst of his work upon art.[1] Very vivid, very graphic, full of sensibility, but inconsequent in some of the reasoning, it seemed to me, and rather flashy than full in the metaphysics. Robert, who knows a good deal about art, to which knowledge I of course have no pretence, could agree with him only by snatches, and we, both of us, standing before a very expressive picture of Domenichino's (the 'David'—at Fano) wondered how he could blaspheme so against a great artist. Still, he is no ordinary man, and for a critic to be so much a poet is a great thing. Also, we have by no means, I should imagine, seen the utmost of his stature. How kindly you speak to me of my dearest sisters. Yes, go to see them whenever you are in London, they are worthy of the gladness of receiving you. And will you write soon to me, and tell me everything of yourself, how you are, how home agrees with you, and the little details which are such gold dust to absent friends. . . .

May God bless you, my beloved friend. Let me ever be (my husband joining in all warm regards) your most affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: October 10, 1848.

My ever dearest Miss Mitford,—Have you not thought some hard thoughts of me, for not instantly replying to a letter which necessarily must have been, to one who loved you, of such painful interest? Do I not love you truly? Yes, in-

[1] The first two volumes of *Modern Painters* bore no author's name, but were described as being 'by a graduate of Oxford.' At a later date Mrs. Browning made Mr. Ruskin's acquaintance, as some subsequent letters testify.

deed. But while preparing to write to you my deep regret at hearing that you had been so ill, illness came in another form to prevent me from writing, my husband being laid up for nearly a month with fever and ulcerated sore throat. I had not the heart to write a line to anyone, much less to prepare a packet to escort your letter free from foreign postage; and to make you pay for a chapter of Lamentations without the spirit of prophecy, would have been too hard on you, wouldn't it? Quite unhappy I have been over those burning hands and languid eyes, the only unhappiness I ever had by *them*, and then he wouldn't see a physician; and if it hadn't been that, just at the right moment, Mr. Mahoney, the celebrated Jesuit, and Father Prout of 'Fraser,' knowing everything as those Jesuits are apt to do, came in to us on his way to Rome, pointed out that the fever got ahead through weakness and mixed up with his own kind hand a potion of eggs and port wine, to the horror of our Italian servant, who lifted up his eyes at such a prescription for a fever, crying, 'O Inglesi, Inglesi!' the case would have been far worse, I have no kind of doubt. For the eccentric prescription gave the power of sleeping, and the pulse grew quieter directly. I shall always be grateful to Father Prout, always. The very sight of some one with a friend's name and a cheerful face, his very jests at me for being a 'bambina' and frightened without cause, were as comforting as the salutation of angels. Also, he has been in Florence ever since, and we have seen him every day; he came to doctor and remained to talk. A very singular person, of whom the world tells a thousand and one tales, you know, but of whom I shall speak as I find him, because the utmost kindness and warmheartedness have characterised his whole bearing towards us. Robert met him years ago at dinner at Emerson Tennent's, and since has crossed paths with him on various points of Europe. The first time I saw him was as he stood on a rock at Leghorn, at our disembarkation in Italy. Not refined in a social sense by any manner of means, yet

a most accomplished scholar and vibrating all over with learned associations and vivid combinations of fancy and experience — having seen all the ends of the earth and the men thereof, and possessing the art of talk and quotation to an amusing degree. In another week or two he will be at Rome. . . . How graphically you give us your Oxford student! Well! the picture is more distinct than Turner's, and if you had called it, in the manner of the Master, 'A Rock Limpet,' we should have recognised in it the corresponding type of the gifted and eccentric writer in question. Very eloquent he is, I agree at once, and true views he takes of Art in the abstract, true and elevating. It is in the application of connective logic that he breaks away from one so violently. . . . We are expecting our books by an early vessel, and are about to be very busy, building up a rococo bookcase of carved angels and demons. Also we shall get up curtains, and get down bedroom carpets, and finish the remainder of our furnishing business, now that the hot weather is at an end. I say 'at an end,' though the glass stands at seventy. As to the 'war,' *that* is rather different, it is painful to feel ourselves growing gradually cooler and cooler on the subject of Italian patriotism, valour, and good sense; but the process is inevitable. The child's play between the Livornese and our Grand Duke provokes a thousand pleasantries. Every now and then a day is fixed for a revolution in Tuscany, but up to the present time a shower has come and put it off. Two Sundays ago Florence was to have been 'sacked' by Leghorn, when a drizzle came and saved us. You think this a bad joke of mine or an impotent sarcasm, perhaps; whereas I merely speak historically. Brave men, good men, even sensible men there are of course in the land, but they are not strong enough for the times or for masterdom. For France, it is a great nation; but even in France they want a man, and Cavaignac[1] is only a soldier. If Louis Napoleon had the

[1] At this time President of the Council, after suppressing the Communist rising of June 1848.

muscle of his uncle's little finger in his soul, he would be president, and king; but he is flaccid altogether, you see, and Joinville stands nearer to the royal probability after all. 'Henri Cinq' is said to be too closely espoused to the Church, and his connections at Naples and Parma don't help his cause. Robert has more hope of the *republic* than I have: but call ye *this* a republic? Do you know that Miss Martineau takes up the 'History of England' under Charles Knight, in the continuation of a popular book? I regret her fine imagination being so wasted. So you saw Mr. Chorley? What a pleasant flashing in the eyes! We hear of him in Holland and Norway. Dear Mr. Kenyon won't stir from England, we see plainly. Ah! Frederic Soulié! he is too dead, I fear. Perhaps he goes on, though, writing romances, after the fashion of poor Miss Pickering, that prove nothing. I long for my French fountains of living literature, which, pure or impure, plashed in one's face so pleasantly. Some old French 'Mémoires' we have got at lately, 'Brienne' for instance. It is curious how the leaders of the last revolution (under Louis XVIII.) seem to have despised one another. Brienne is very dull and flat. For Puseyism, it runs counter to the spirit of our times, after all, and will never achieve a church. May God bless you! Robert's regards go with the love of your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: December 3, 1848.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — It seemed long to me that you had not written, and it seems long to me now that I have not answered the kind letter which came at last. Then Henrietta told me of your being unwell at the moment of her mad excursion into Herefordshire. Altogether I want to speak to you and hear from you, and shall be easier and gladder when both are done. Do

forgive my sins and write directly, and tell me everything about both of you, and how you are in spirits and health, and whether you really make up your minds to see more danger in the stormy influences of the Continent in the moral point of view than in those of England in the physical. For my part I hold to my original class of fear, and would rather face two or three revolutions than an east wind of an English winter. If I were you I would go to Pau as usual and take poor Abd-el-Kader's place (my husband is furious about the treatment of Abd-el-Kader, so I hear a good deal about him[1]), or I would go to Italy and try Florence, where really democratic ministries roar as gently as sucking doves, particularly when they are safe in place. We have listened to dreadful rumours — Florence was to have been sacked several times by the Livornese; the Grand Duke went so far as to send away his family to Siena, and we had 'Morte a Fiorentini!' chalked up on the walls. Still, somehow or other, the peace has been kept in Florentine fashion; it has rained once or twice, which is always enough here to moderate the most revolutionary when they wear their best surtouts, and I look forward to an unbroken tranquillity just as I used to do, even though the windows of the Ridolfi Palace (the ambassador in London) were smashed the other evening a few yards from ours. Perhaps a gentle and affectionate approach to contempt for our Florentines mixes a little with this feeling of security, but what then? They are an amiable, refined, graceful people, with much of the artistic temperament as distinguished from that of men of genius — effeminate, no, rather *feminine* in a better sense — of a fancy easily turned into impulse, but with no strenuous and determinate strength in them. What they comprehend best in the

[1] Abd-el-Kader surrendered to the French in Algeria early in 1848, under an express promise that he should be sent either to Alexandria or to St. Jean d'Acre; in spite of which he was sent to France and kept there as a prisoner for several years.

'Italian League' is probably a league to wear silk velvet and each a feather in his hat, to carry flags and cry *vivas*, and keep a grand festa day in the piazzas. Better and happier in this than in stabbing prime ministers, or hanging up their dead bodies to shoot at; and not much more childish than these French patriots and republicans, who crown their great deeds by electing to the presidency such a man as Prince Louis Napoleon, simply because 'C'est le neveu de son oncle!'[1] A curious precedent for a president, certainly; but, oh heavens and earth, what curious things abroad everywhere just now, inclusive of the sea serpent! I agree with you that much of all is very melancholy and disheartening, though holding fast by my hope and belief that good will be the end, as it always *is* God's end to man's frenzies, and that all we observe is but the fermentation necessary to the new wine, which presently we shall drink pure. Meanwhile, the saddest thing is the impossibility (which I, for one, feel) to sympathise, to go along with, the *people* to whom and to whose cause all my natural sympathies yearn. The word 'Liberty' ceases to make me thrill, as at something great and unmistakable, as, for instance, the other great words Truth and Justice do. The salt has lost its savour, the meaning has escaped from the term; we know nothing of what people will *do* when they aspire to Liberty. The holiness of liberty is desecrated by the sign of the ass's hoof. Fixed principles, either of opinion or action, seem clearly gone out of the world. The principle of Destruction is in the place of the principle of Re-integration, or of Radical Reform, as we called it in England. I look all round and can sympathise nowhere. The rulers hold by rottenness, and the people leap into the abyss, and nobody knows why this is, or why that is. As to France, my tears (which I really couldn't help at the time of the expulsion of poor Louis Philippe

[1] Louis Napoleon was elected President of the French Republic by a popular vote on December 10.

and his family, not being very strong just then) are justified, it appears, though my husband thought them foolish (and so did I), and though we both began by an adhesion to the Republic in the cordial manner. But, just see, the Republic was a 'man in an iron mask' or helmet, and turns out a military dictatorship, a throttling of the press, a starving of the finances, and an election of Louis Napoleon to be President. Louis Philippe was better than all this, take him at worst, and at worst he did *not* deserve the mud and stones cast at him, which I have always maintained and maintain still. England might have got up ('happy country') more crying grievances than France at the moment of outbreak; but what makes outbreaks now-a-days is not 'the cause, my soul,' but the stuff of the people. You are huckaback on the other side of the Channel, and you wear out the poor Irish linen, let the justice of the case be what it may. Politics enough and too much, surely, especially now when they are depressing to you, and more or less to everybody. . . . We are still in the slow agonies of furnishing our apartment. You see, being the poorest and most prudent of possible poets, we had to solve the problem of taking our furniture out of our year's income (proceeds of poems and the like), and of not getting into debt. Oh, I take no credit to myself; I was always in debt in my little way ('small *im*morals,' as Dr. Bowring might call it) before I married, but Robert, though a poet and dramatist by profession, being descended from the blood of all the Puritans, and educated by the strictest of dissenters, has a sort of horror about the dreadful fact of owing five shillings five days, which I call quite morbid in its degree and extent, and which is altogether unpoetical according to the traditions of the world. So we have been dragging in by inches our chairs and tables throughout the summer, and by no means look finished and furnished at this late moment, the slow Italians coming at the heels of our slowest intentions with the putting up of our curtains,

which begin to be necessary in this November tramontana. Yet in a month or three weeks we shall look quite comfortable — before Christmas; and in the meantime we heap up the pine wood and feel perfectly warm with these thick palace walls between us and the outside air. Also my husband's new edition is on the *edge* of coming out, and we have had an application from Mr. Phelps, of Sadler's Wells, for leave to act his 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' which, if it doesn't succeed, its public can have neither hearts nor intellects (that being an impartial opinion), and which, if it succeeds, will be of pecuniary advantage to us. Look out in the papers. . . . My love and my husband's go to you, our dear friends. Let me be always

Your affectionate and grateful

Ba.

While Italy shows herself so politically demoralised, and the blood of poor Russia smokes from the ground, the ground seems to care no more for it than the newspapers, or anybody else.

Such a jar of flowers we have to keep December. White roses, as in June.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 16, [1848].

. . . You are wondering, perhaps, how we are so foolhardy as to keep on furnishing rooms in the midst of 'anarchy,' the Pope a fugitive, and the crowned heads packing up. Ah, but we have faith in the *softness* of our Florentines, who must be well spurred up to the leap before they do any harm. These things look worse at a distance than they do near, although, seen far and near, nothing *can* be worse than the evidence of demoralisation of people, governors, and journalists, in the sympathy given

everywhere to the assassination of poor Rossi.[1] If Rossi was retrocessive, he was at least a constitutional minister, and constitutional means of opposing him were open to all, but Italy understands nothing constitutional; liberty is a fair word and a watchword, nothing more; an idea it is not in the minds of any. The poor Pope I deeply pity; he is a weak man with the noblest and most disinterested intentions. His faithful flock have nearly broken his heart by the murder of his two personal friends, Rossi and Palma, and the threat, which they sent him by embassy, of murdering every man, woman, and child in the Quirinal, 'with the exception of his Holiness,' unless he accepted their terms. He should have gone out to them and so died, but having missed that opportunity, nothing remained but flight. He was a mere Pope hostage as long as he stayed in Rome. Curious, the 'intervention of the French,' so long desired by the Italians, and vouchsafed *so*.[2] The Florentines open their eyes in mute astonishment, and some of them 'won't read the journals any more.' The boldest say softly that the *Romans are sure not to bear it.* And what is to happen in France? Why, what a world we have just now. . . . Father Prout is gone to Rome for a fortnight, has stayed three weeks, and day by day we expect him back again. I don't understand how the Prout papers should have hurt him ecclesiastically, but that he should be *known* for their writer is not astonishing, as the secret was never, I believe, attempted to be kept. We have been, at least *I* have been, a little anxious lately about the fate of the 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon,' which

[1] Count Pellegrino Rossi, chief minister to the Pope, was assassinated in Rome, at the entrance of the Chamber of Deputies, on November 15, 1848. Ten days later the Pope fled to Gaeta, and his experiments in 'reform' came to a final end.

[2] The Pope, having declared war against Austria before his flight, had invited French support, with the concurrence of his people; being expelled from Rome, he invited (and obtained) French help to restore him, in spite of the desperate opposition of his people.

Mr. Phelps applied for my husband's permission to revive at Sadler's. Of course, putting the request was a mere form, as he had every right to act the play, and there was nothing to answer but one thing. Only it made one anxious — made *me* anxious — till we heard the result, and we, both of us, are very grateful to dear Mr. Chorley, who not only made it his business to be at the theatre the first night, but, before he slept, sat down like a true friend to give us the story of the result, and never, he says, was a more complete and legitimate success. The play went straight to the heart of the audience, it seems, and we hear of its continuance on the stage from the papers. So far, so well. You may remember, or may not have heard, how Macready brought it out and put his foot on it in the flash of a quarrel between manager and author, and Phelps, knowing the whole secret and feeling the power of the play, determined on making a revival of it on his own theatre, which was wise, as the event proves. Mr. Chorley called his acting really 'fine.' I see the second edition of the 'Poetical Works' advertised at last in the 'Athenæum,' and conclude it to be coming out directly. Also my second edition is called for, only nothing is yet arranged on that point. We have had a most interesting letter from Mr. Horne, giving terrible accounts, to be sure, of the submersion of all literature in England and France since the French Revolution, but noble and instructive proof of individual wave-riding energy, such as I have always admired in him. He and his wife, he says, live chiefly on the produce of their garden, and keep a cheerful heart for the rest; even the 'Institutes' expect gratuitous lectures, so that the sweat of the brain seems less productive than the sweat of the brow. I am glad that Mr. Serjeant Talfourd and his wife spoke affectionately of my husband, for he is attached to both of them. . . . My Flush has grown to be passionately fond of grapes, devouring bunch after bunch, and looking so fat and well that we attribute some virtue to them. When he

goes to England he will be as much in a strait as an Italian who related to us his adventures in London; he had had a long walk in the heat, and catching sight of grapes hanging up in a grocer's shop, he stopped short to have a pennyworth, as he said inwardly to himself. Down he sat and made out a Tuscan luncheon in purple bunches. At last, taking out his purse to look for the halfpence: 'Fifteen shillings, sir, if you please,' said the shopman. Now do write soon, and speak particularly of your health, and take care of it and don't be too complaisant to visitors. My God bless you, my very dear friend. Think of me as

Ever your affectionate and grateful

E. B. B.

My husband's regards always.

CHAPTER VI

1849–1851

THERE is here a pause of two months in the correspondence of Mrs. Browning, during which the happiness of her already happy life was crowned by the birth, on March 9, 1849, of her son, Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning.[1] How great a part this child henceforward played in her life will be shown abundantly by the letters that follow. Some passages referring to the child's growth, progress, and performances have been omitted, partly in the necessary reduction of the bulk of the correspondence and partly because too much of one subject may weary the reader. But enough has been left to show that, in the case of Mrs. Browning (and of her husband likewise), the parent was by no means lost in the poet. There is little in what she says which might not equally be said, and is in substance said, by hundreds of happy mothers in every age; but it would be a suppression of one essential part of her nature, and an injury to the pleasant picture which the whole life of this poet pair presents, if her enthusiasms over her child were omitted or seriously curtailed. Biographers are fond of elaborating the details in which the lives of poets have not conformed to the standard of the moral virtues; let us at least recognise that, in the case of Robert and Elizabeth Browning, the

[1] Wiedeman was the maiden name of Mr. Browning's mother, her father having been a German who settled in Scotland and married a Scotch wife.

moral and the intellectual virtues flourished side by side, each contributing its share to the completeness of the whole character.

The joy of this firstborn's birth was, however, very quickly dimmed by the news of the death, only a few days later, of Mr. Browning's mother, to whom he was devotedly attached. Her death was very sudden, and the shock of the reaction completely prostrated him for a long time. The following letters from Mrs. Browning tell how he felt this loss.

To Miss Browning

April 1, 1849 [postmark].

I do indeed from the bottom of my heart pity you and grieve with you, my dearest Sarianna. I may grieve with you as well as for you; for I too have lost. Believe that, though I never saw her face, I loved that pure and tender spirit (tender to me even at this distance), and that she will be dear and sacred to me to the end of my own life.

Dearest Sarianna, I thank you for your consideration and admirable self-control in writing those letters. I do thank and bless you. If the news had come unbroken by such precaution to my poor darling Robert, it would have nearly killed him, I think. As it is, he has been able to cry from the first, and I am able to tell you that though dreadfully affected, of course, for you know his passionate love for her, he is better and calmer now — much better. He and I dwell on the hope that you and your dear father will come to us at once. Come — dear, dear Sarianna — I will at least love you as you deserve — you and him — if I can do no more. If you would comfort Robert, come.

No day has passed since our marriage that he has not fondly talked of her. I know how deep in his dear heart her memory lies. God comfort you, my dearest Sarianna. The blessing of blessed duties heroically fulfilled *must* be

with you. May the blessing of the Blessed in heaven be added to the rest.

Robert stops me. My dear love to your father.

Your ever attached sister,

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[April 1849.]

You will have comfort in hearing, my dearest Sarianna, that Robert is better on the whole than when I wrote last, though still very much depressed. I wish I could get him to go somewhere or do something — at any rate God's comforts are falling like dew on all this affliction, and must in time make it look a green memory to you both. Continually he thinks of you and of his father — believe how continually and tenderly he thinks of you. Dearest Sarianna, I feel so in the quick of my heart how you must feel, that I scarcely have courage to entreat you to go out and take the necessary air and exercise, and yet that is a duty, clear as other duties, and to be discharged like others by you, as fully, and with as little shrinking of the will. If your health should suffer, what grief upon grief to those who grieve already! And besides, we who have to live are not to lie down under the burden. There will be time enough for lying down presently, very soon; and in the meanwhile there is plenty of God's work to do with the body and with the soul, and we have to do it as cheerfully as we can. Dearest Sarianna, you can look behind and before, on blessed memories and holy hopes — love is as full for you as ever in the old relation, even though her life in the world is cut off. There is no drop of bitterness in all this flood of sorrow. In the midst of the great anguish which God has given, you have to thank Him for some blessing with every pang as it comes. Never was a more beautiful, serene, assuring death than this we are

all in tears for — for, believe me, my very dear sister, I have mourned with you, knowing what we all have lost, I who never saw her nor shall see her until a few years shall bring us all together to the place where none mourn nor are parted. Sarianna, will it not be possible, do you think, for you and your father to come here, if only for a few months? Then you might decide on the future upon more knowledge than you have now. It would be comfort and joy to Robert and me if we could all of us live together henceforward. Think what you would like, and how you would best like it. Your living on *even through this summer at that house*, I, who have well known the agony of such bindings to the rack, do protest against. Dearest Sarianna, it is not good or right either for you or for your dear father. For Robert to go back to that house unless it were to do one of you some good, think how it would be with *him*.' Tell us now (for he yearns towards you — we both do), what is the best way of bringing us all together, so as to do every one of us some good? If Florence is too far off, is there any other place where we could meet and arrange for the future? Could not your dear father's leave of absence be extended this summer, out of consideration of what has happened, and would he not be so enabled to travel with you and meet us *somewhere?* We will do anything. For my part, I am full of anxiety; and for Robert, you may guess what his is, you who know him. Very bitter has it been to me to have interposed unconsciously as I have done and deprived him of her last words and kisses — very bitter — and nothing could be so consolatory to me as to give him back to *you* at least. So think for me, dearest Sarianna — think for your father and yourself, think for Robert — and remember that Robert and I will do anything which shall appear possible to you. May God bless you, both of you! Give my true love to your father. Feeling for you and with you always and most tenderly, I am your affectionate sister,

BA.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: April 30, 1849.

I am writing to you, *at last*, you will say, ever dearest Miss Mitford; but except once to Wimpole Street, this is the first packet of letters which goes from me since my confinement. You will have heard how our joy turned suddenly into deep sorrow by the death of my husband's mother. An unsuspected disease (ossification of the heart) terminated in a fatal way, and she lay in the insensibility precursive of the grave's, when the letter, written in such gladness by my poor husband, and announcing the birth of his child, reached her address. 'It would have made her heart bound,' said her daughter to us. Poor, tender heart, the last throb was too near. The medical men would not allow the news to be communicated. The next joy she felt was to be in heaven itself. My husband has been in the deepest anguish, and indeed, except for the courageous consideration of his sister, who wrote two letters of preparation saying that 'she was not well,' and she 'was very ill,' when in fact all was over, I am frightened to think what the result would have been to him. He has loved his mother as such passionate natures only can love, and I never saw a man so bowed down in an extremity of sorrow — never. Even now the depression is great, and sometimes when I leave him alone a little and return to the room, I find him in tears. I do earnestly wish to change the scene and air; but where to go? England looks terrible now. He says it would break his heart to see his mother's roses over the wall, and the place where she used to lay her scissors and gloves. Which I understand so thoroughly that I can't say, 'Let us go to England.' We must wait and see what his father and sister will choose to do or choose us to do, for of course a duty plainly seen would draw us anywhere. My own dearest sisters will be painfully disappointed by any

change of plan, only they are too good and kind not to understand the difficulty, not to see the motive. So do *you*, I am certain. It has been very very painful altogether, this drawing together of life and death. Robert was too enraptured at my safety, and with his little son, and the sudden reaction was terrible. You see how natural that was. How kind of you to write that note to him full of affectionate expressions towards me! Thank you, dearest friend. He had begged my sisters to let you know of my welfare, and I hope they did; and now it is my turn to know of *you*, and so I do entreat you not to delay, but to let me hear exactly how you are and what your plans are for the summer. Do you think of Paris seriously? Am I not a sceptic about your voyages round the world? It's about the only thing that I don't thoroughly believe you *can* do. But (not to be impertinent) I want to hear so much! I want first and chiefly to hear of your health; and occupations next, and next your plans for the summer. Louis Napoleon is astonishing the world, you see, by his firmness and courage; and though really I don't make out the aim and end of his French republicans in going to Rome to extinguish the republic there, I wait before I swear at him for it till my information becomes fuller. If they have at Rome such a republic as we have had in Florence, without a public, imposed by a few bawlers and brawlers on many mutes and cowards, why, the sooner it goes to pieces the better, of course. Probably the French Government acts upon information. In any case, if the Romans are in earnest they may resist eight thousand men.[1] We shall see. My faith in every species of Italian is, however, nearly tired out. I don't believe they are men at all, much less heroes and patriots. Since I wrote last to you, I think we have had two revolutions here at Florence, Grand Duke out, Grand

[1] As they did until the 8,000 had been increased to 35,000.

Duke in.[1] The bells in the church opposite rang for both. They first planted a tree of liberty close to our door, and then they pulled it down. The same tune, sung under the windows, did for 'Viva la republica!' and 'Viva Leopoldo!' The genuine popular feeling is certainly for the Grand Duke ('O, santissima madre di Dio!' said our nurse, clasping her hands, 'how the people do love him!'); only nobody would run the risk of a pin's prick to save the ducal throne. If the Leghornese, who put up Guerazzi on its ruins, had not refused to pay at certain Florentine cafés, we shouldn't have had revolution the second, and all this shooting in the street! Dr. Harding, who was coming to see me, had time to get behind a stable door, just before there was a fall against it of four shot corpses; and Robert barely managed to get home across the bridges. He had been out walking in the city, apprehending nothing, when the storm gathered and broke. Sad and humiliating it all has been, and the author of 'Vanity Fair' might turn it to better uses for a chapter. By the way, we have just been reading 'Vanity Fair.' Very clever, very effective, but cruel to human nature. A painful book, and not the pain that purifies and exalts. Partial truths after all, and those not wholesome. But I certainly had no idea that Mr. Thackeray had intellectual force for such a book; the power is considerable. For Balzac, Balzac may have gone out of the world as far as we are concerned. Isn't it hard on us? exiles from Balzac! The bookseller here, having despaired of the republic and the Grand Duchy both, I suppose, and taking for granted on the whole that the world must be coming shortly to an end, doesn't give us the sign of a new book. We ought to be done with such vanities. There! and almost I have done my paper without a single word to you of the *baby!* Ah, you won't believe that I forgot him even if I pretend,

[1] A revolution, fomented chiefly by the Leghornese, expelled the Grand Duke in March 1849; about seven weeks later a counter-revolution, chiefly by the peasantry, recalled him.

so I won't. He is a lovely, fat, strong child, with double chins and rosy cheeks, and a great wide chest, undeniable lungs, I can assure you. Dr. Harding called him 'a robust child' the other day, and 'a more beautiful child he never saw.' I never saw a child half as beautiful, for my part. . . . Dear Mr. Chorley has written the kindest letter to my husband. I much regard him indeed. May God bless you. Let me ever be (with Robert's thanks and warm remembrance)

Your most affectionate

BA.

Flush's jealousy of the baby would amuse you. For a whole fortnight he fell into deep melancholy and was proof against all attentions lavished on him. Now he begins to be consoled a little and even condescends to patronise the cradle.

To Miss Browning

[Florence:] May 2, 1849.

Robert gives me this blank, and three minutes to write across it. Thank you, my very dear Sarianna, for all your kindness and affection. I understand what I have lost. I know the worth of a tenderness such as you speak of, and I feel that for the sake of my love for Robert she was ready out of the fullness of her heart to love *me* also. It has been bitter to me that I have unconsciously deprived him of the personal face-to-face shining out of her angelic nature for more than two years, but she has forgiven me, and we shall all meet, when it pleases God, before His throne. In the meanwhile, my dearest Sarianna, we are thinking much of you, and neither of us can bear the thought of your living on where you are. If you could imagine the relief it would be to us — to me as well as to Robert — to be told frankly what we ought to do, where we ought to go, to please you best — you and your dearest father — you would think the whole matter over and use

plain words in the speaking of it. Robert naturally shrinks from the idea of going to New Cross under the circumstances of dreary change, and for his sake England has grown suddenly to me a land of clouds. Still, to see you and his father, and to be some little comfort to you both, would be the best consolation to him, I am very sure; and so, dearest Sarianna, think of us and speak to us. Could not your father get a long vacation? Could we not meet somewhere? Think how we best may comfort ourselves by comforting you. Never think of us, Sarianna, as apart from you — as if our interest or our pleasure *could* be apart from yours. The child is so like Robert that I can believe in the other likeness, and may the inner nature indeed, as you say, be after that pure image! He is so fat and rosy and strong that almost I am sceptical of his being my child. I suppose he is, after all. May God bless you, both of you. I am ashamed to send all these letters, but Robert makes me. He is better, but still much depressed sometimes, and over your letters he drops heavy tears. Then he treasures them up and reads them again and again. Better, however, on the whole, he is certainly. Poor little babe, who was too much rejoiced over at *first*, fell away by a most natural recoil (even *I* felt it to be *most natural*) from all that triumph, but Robert is still very fond of him, and goes to see him bathed every morning, and walks up and down on the terrace with him in his arms. If your dear father can toss and rock babies as Robert can, he will be a nurse in great favour.

Dearest Sarianna, take care of yourself, and do walk out. No grief in the world was ever freer from the corroding drop of bitterness — was ever sweeter, holier, and more hopeful than this of yours must be. Love is for you on both sides of the grave, and the blossoms of love meet over it. May God's love, too, bless you!

Your ever affectionate sister,

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: May 14, [1849].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — At last I come to thank you for all your kindness, all your goodness, all your sympathy for both of us. Robert would have written to you in the first instance (for we *both* thought of you) if we had not agreed that you would hear as quickly from Henrietta, we not knowing your direct address. Also your welcome little note should have had an immediate acknowledgment from him if he had not been so depressed at that time that I was glad to ask him to wait till I should be ready to write myself. In fact, he has suffered most acutely from the affliction you have since of course heard of; and just because he was *too happy* when the child was born, the pain was overwhelming afterwards. That is easy to understand, I think. While he was full of joy for the child, his mother was dying at a distance, and the very thought of accepting that new affection for the old became a thing to recoil from — do you not see? So far from suffering less through the particular combination of circumstances, as some people seemed to fancy he would, he suffered much more, I am certain, and very naturally. Even now he is looking very unwell — thinner and paler than usual, and his spirits, which used to be so good, have not rallied. I long to get him away from Florence somewhere — *where*, I can't fix my wishes; our English plans seem flat on the ground for the present, *that* is one sad certainty. My dearest sisters will be very grieved if we don't go to England, and yet how can I even try to persuade my husband back into the scene of old associations where he would feel so much pain? Do I not know what I myself should suffer in some places? And he loved his mother with all his power of loving, which is deeper and more passionate than love is with common men. The hearts of men are generally strong in proportion

to their heads. Well, I am not to send you such a dull letter, though, after waiting so long, and after receiving so much to speak thankfully of. My child you never would believe to be *my child*, from the evidence of his immense cheeks and chins — for pray don't suppose that he has only one chin. People call him a lovely child, and if *I* were to call him the same it wouldn't be very extraordinary, only I assure you 'a robust child' I may tell you that he is with a sufficient modesty, and also that Wilson says he is universally admired in various tongues when she and the nurse go out with him to the Cascine — 'What a beautiful baby!' and 'Che bel bambino!' He has had a very stormy entrance upon life, poor little fellow; and when he was just three days old, a grand festa round the liberty tree planted at our door, attended with military music, civic dancing and singing, and the firing of cannons and guns from morning to night, made him start in his cradle, and threw my careful nurse into paroxysms of devotion before the 'Vergine Santissima' that I mightn't have a fever in consequence. Since then the tree of liberty has come down with a crash and we have had another festa as noisy on that occasion. Revolution and counter-revolution, Guerazzi[1] and Leopold, sacking of Florence and entrance of the Austrian army — we live through everything, you see, and baby grows fat indiscriminately. For my part, I am altogether *blasée* about revolutions and invasions. Don't think it want of feeling in me, or want of sympathy with 'the people,' but really I can't help a certain political latitudinarianism from creeping over me in relation to this Tuscany. You ought to be here to understand what I mean and how I think. Oh heavens! how ignoble it all has been and is! A revolution made by boys and *vivas*, and unmade by boys and *vivas* — no, there was blood shed in the unmaking — some horror and terror, but not as much patriotism and truth as could lift

[1] Chief administrator of the Republic of Tuscany during the short absence of the Grand Duke Leopold.

up the blood from the kennel. The counter-revolution was strictly *counter*, observe. I mean, that if the Leghornese troops here had paid their debts at the Florentine coffee houses, the Florentines would have let their beloved Grand Duke stay on at Gaeta to the end of the world. The Grand Duke, too, whose part I have been taking hitherto (because he did seem to me a good man, more sinned against than sinning) — the Grand Duke I give up from henceforth, seeing that he has done this base thing of taking again his Austrian titles in his proclamations coincidently with the approach of the Austrians. Of Rome, knowing nothing, I don't like to speak. If a republic *in earnest* is established there, Louis Napoleon should not try to set his foot on it. Dearest Mrs. Martin, how you mistake me about France, and how too lightly I must have spoken. If you knew how I admire the French as a nation! Robert always calls them '*my beloved French*.' Their very faults appear to me to arise from an excess of ideality and aspiration; but I was vexed rather at their selection of Louis Napoleon — a selection since justified by the firmness and apparent integrity of the man. His reputation in England, you will admit, did not promise the conclusion. Will he be emperor, do you imagine? And shall I ever have done talking politics? I would far rather talk of *you*, after all. Henrietta tells me of your looking well, but of your not being strong yet. Now do, *for once*, have a fit of egotism and tell me a little about yourself. . . . Surely I ought especially to thank you, dearest kind friend, for your goodness in writing to ——, of which Henrietta very properly told me. I never shall forget this and other proofs of your affection for me, and shall remember them with warm gratitude always. As to ——, I have held out both [my] hands, and my husband's hands in mine, again and again to him; he cannot possibly, in the secret place of his heart, expect more from either of us. My husband would have written to him in the first place, but for the obstacles raised

by himself and others, and now what *could* Robert write and say except the bare repetition of what I have said over and over for him and myself? It is exactly an excuse — not more and not less. Just before I was ill I sent my last messages, because, with certain hazards before me, my heart turned to them naturally. I might as well have turned to a rock. —— has been by far the kindest, and has written to me two or three little notes, and one since the birth of our child. I love them all far too well to be proud, and my husband loves me too well not to wish to be friends with every one of them; we have neither of us any stupid feeling about 'keeping up our dignity.' Yes, I had a letter from —— some time ago, in which something was said of Robert's being careless of reconciliation. I answered it most explicitly and affectionately, with every possible assurance from Robert, and offering them from himself the affection of a brother. Not a word in answer! To my poor dearest papa I have written very lately, and as my letter has not, after a week, been sent back, I catch at the hope of his being moved a little. If he neither sends it back nor replies severely, I shall take courage to write to him again after a while. It will be an immense gain to get him only to read my letters. My father and my brothers hold quite different positions, of course, and though he has acted sternly towards me, I, knowing his peculiarities, do not feel embittered and astonished and disappointed as in the other cases. Absolutely happy my marriage has been — never could there be a happier marriage (as there are no marriages in heaven); but dear Henrietta is quite wrong in fancying, or seeming to fancy, that this quarrel with my family has given or gives me slight pain. Old affections are not so easily trodden out of me, indeed, and while I live unreconciled to them, there must be a void and a drawback. Do write to me and tell me of both of you, my very dear friends. Don't fancy that we are not anxious for brave Venice and Sicily, and that we don't hate this

Austrian invasion. But Tuscany has acted a vile part altogether — *so* vile, that I am sceptical about the Romans. We expect daily the Austrians in Florence, and have made up our minds to be very kind. May God bless you! Do write, and mention your health particularly, as I am anxious about it. I am quite well myself, and, as ever,

Your affectionate

BA.

Don't you both like Macaulay's History? We are delighted just now with it.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about June 1849.]

I must say to my dearest Sarianna how delighted we are at the thought of seeing her in Florence. I wish it had been before the autumn, but since autumn is decided for we must be content to reap our golden harvest at the time for such things. Certainly the summer heat of Florence is terrible enough — only we should have carried you with us into the shade somewhere to the sea or to the mountains — and Robert has, of course, told you of our Spezzia plan. The 'fatling of the flock' has been sheared closely of his long petticoats. Did he tell you that? And you can't think how funny the little creature looks without his train, his wise baby face appearing to approve of the whole arrangement. He talks to himself now and smiles at everybody, and admired my roses so much the other day that he wanted to eat them; having a sublime transcendental notion about the mouth being the receptacle of all beauty and glory in this world. Tell your dear father that certainly he *is* a 'sweet baby,' there's no denying it. We lay him down on the floor to let him kick at ease, and he makes violent efforts to get up by himself, and Wilson declares that the least encouragement would set him walk-

ing. Robert's nursing does not mend his spirits much. I shall be very glad to get him away from Florence; he has suffered too much here to rally as I long to see him do, because, dearest Sarianna, we have to live after all; and to live rightly we must turn our faces forward and press forward and not look backward morbidly for the footsteps in the dust of those beloved ones who travelled with us but yesterday. They themselves are not behind but before, and we carry with us our tenderness living and undiminished towards them, to be completed when the round of this life is complete for us also. Dearest Sarianna, why do I say such things, but because I have known what grief is? Oh, and how I could have compounded with you, grief for grief, mine for yours, for *I* had no last words nor gestures, Sarianna. God keep you from such a helpless bitter agony as mine then was. Dear Sarianna, you will think of us and of Florence, my dear sister, and remember how you have made us a promise and have to keep it. May God bless you and comfort you. We think of you and love you continually, and I am always your most affectionate

BA.

In July the move from Florence, of which Mrs. Browning speaks in the above letter, was effected, the place ultimately chosen for escape from the summer heat in the valley of the Arno being the Bagni di Lucca. Here three months were spent, as the following letters describe. By this time the struggle for Italian liberty had ended in failure everywhere. The battle of Novara, on March 23, had prostrated Piedmont, and caused the abdication of its king, Charles Albert. The Tuscan Republic had come and gone, and the Grand Duke had re-entered his capital under the protection of Austrian bayonets. Sicily had been reduced to subjection to the Bourbons of Naples. On July 2 the French entered Rome, bringing back the Pope cured of his leanings to reform and constitutional government; on the

24th Venice, after an heroic resistance, capitulated to the Austrians. The struggle was over for the time; the longing for liberty becomes, of necessity, silent; and we hear little, for a space, of Italian politics. For the moment it might seem justifiable to despair of the republic.

To Miss Mitford

Bagni di Lucca, Toscana: [about July 1849].

At last, you will say, dearest friend. The truth is, I have not been forgetting you (how far from that!) but wandering in search of cool air and a cool bough among all the olive trees to build our summer nest on. My husband has been suffering beyond what one could shut one's eyes to in consequence of the great mental shock of last March — loss of appetite, loss of sleep, looks quite worn and altered. His spirits never rallied except with an effort, and every letter from New Cross threw him back into deep depressions. I was very anxious, and feared much that the end of it all (the intense heat of Florence assisting) would be a nervous fever or something similar. And I had the greatest difficulty in persuading him to leave Florence for a month or two — he, who generally delights so in travelling, had no mind for change or movement. I had to say and swear that baby and I couldn't bear the heat, and that we must and would go away. *Ce que femme veut*, if the latter is at all reasonable, or the former persevering. At last I gained the victory. It was agreed that we two should go on an exploring journey to find out where we could have most shadow at least expense; and we left our child with his nurse and Wilson while we were absent. We went along the coast to Spezzia, saw Carrara with the white marble mountains, passed through the olive forests and the vineyards, avenues of acacia trees, chestnut woods, glorious surprises of most exquisite scenery. I say olive forests advisedly; the olive grows like a forest tree in those regions,

shading the ground with tents of silvery network. The olive near Florence is but a shrub in comparison, and I have learnt to despise a little, too, the Florentine vine, which does not swing such portcullises of massive dewy green from one tree to another as along the whole road where we travelled. Beautiful, indeed, it was. Spezzia wheels the blue sea into the arms of the wooded mountains, and we had a glance at Shelley's house at Lerici. It was melancholy to me, of course. I was not sorry that the lodgings we inquired about were far above our means. We returned on our steps (after two days in the dirtiest of possible inns), saw Seravezza, a village in the mountains, where rock, river, and wood enticed us to stay, and the inhabitants drove us off by their unreasonable prices. It is curious, but just in proportion to the want of civilisation the prices rise in Italy. If you haven't cups and saucers you are made to pay for plate. Well, so finding no rest for the sole of our feet, I persuaded Robert to go to the Baths of Lucca, only to see them. We were to proceed afterwards to San Marcello or some safer wilderness. We had both of us, but he chiefly, the strongest prejudice against these Baths of Lucca, taking them for a sort of wasp's nest of scandal and gaming, and expecting to find everything trodden flat by the continental English; yet I wanted to see the place, because it is a place to see after all. So we came, and were so charmed by the exquisite beauty of the scenery, by the coolness of the climate and the absence of our countrymen, political troubles serving admirably our private requirements, that we made an offer for rooms on the spot, and returned to Florence for baby and the rest of our establishment without further delay. Here we are, then; we have been here more than a fortnight. We have taken an apartment for the season — four months — paying twelve pounds for the whole term, and hoping to be able to stay till the end of October. The living is cheaper than even at Florence, so that there has been no extravagance in coming here. In

fact, Florence is scarcely tenable during the summer from the excessive heat by day and night, even if there were no particular motive for leaving it. We have taken a sort of eagle's nest in this place, the highest house of the highest of the three villages which are called the Bagni di Lucca, and which lie at the heart of a hundred mountains sung to continually by a rushing mountain stream. The sound of the river and of the cicala is all the noise we hear. Austrian drums and carriage wheels cannot vex us; God be thanked for it; the silence is full of joy and consolation. I think my husband's spirits are better already and his appetite improved. Certainly little babe's great cheeks are growing rosier and rosier. He is out all day when the sun is not too strong, and Wilson will have it that he is prettier than the whole population of babies here. He fixes his blue eyes on everybody and smiles universal benevolence, rather too indiscriminately it might be if it were not for Flush. But certainly, on the whole he prefers Flush. He pulls his ears and rides on him, and Flush, though his dignity does not approve of being used as a pony, only protests by turning his head round to kiss the little bare dimpled feet. A merrier, sweeter-tempered child there can't be than our baby, and people wonder at his being so forward at four months old and think there must be a mistake in his age. He is so strong that when I put out two fingers and he has seized them in his fists he can draw himself up on his feet, but we discourage this forwardness, which is not desirable, say the learned. Children of friends of mine at ten months and a year can't do so much. Is it not curious that *my* child should be remarkable for strength and fatness? He has a beaming, thinking little face, too; oh, I wish you could see it. Then my own strength has wonderfully improved, just as my medical friends prophesied; and it seems like a dream when I find myself able to climb the hills with Robert and help him to lose himself in the forests. I have been growing stronger and stronger, and where it is to stop

I can't tell, really; I can do as much, or more, now than at any point of my life since I arrived at woman's estate. The air of this place seems to penetrate the heart and not the lungs only; it draws you, raises you, excites you. Mountain air without its keenness, sheathed in Italian sunshine, think what *that* must be! And the beauty and the solitude — for with a few paces we get free of the habitations of men — all is delightful to me. What is peculiarly beautiful and wonderful is the variety of the shapes of the mountains. They are a multitude, and yet there is no likeness. None, except where the golden mist comes and transfigures them into one glory. For the rest, the mountain there wrapt in the chestnut forest is not like that bare peak which tilts against the sky, nor like that serpent twine of another which seems to move and coil in the moving coiling shadow. Oh, I wish you were here. You would enjoy the shade of the chestnut trees, and the sound of the waterfalls, and at nights seem to be living among the stars; the fireflies are so thick, you would like that too. We have subscribed to a French library where there are scarcely any new books. I have read Bernard's 'Gentilhomme Campagnard' (see how *arriérés* we are in French literature!) and thought it the dullest and worst of his books. I wish I could see the 'Memoirs of Louis Napoleon,' but there is no chance of such good fortune. All this egotism has been written with a heart full of thoughts of you and anxieties for you. Do write to me directly and say first how your precious health is, and then that you have ceased to suffer pain for your friends. . . . But your dear self chiefly — how are you, my dearest Miss Mitford? I do long so for good news of you. On our arrival here Mr. Lever called on us. A most cordial vivacious manner, a glowing countenance, with the animal spirits somewhat predominant over the intellect, yet the intellect by no means in default; you can't help being surprised into being pleased with him, whatever your previous inclination may be. Natural too, and a *gentleman*

past mistake. His eldest daughter is nearly grown up, and his youngest six months old. He has children of every sort of intermediate age almost, but he himself is young enough still. Not the slightest Irish accent. He seems to have spent nearly his whole life on the Continent and by no means to be tired of it. Ah, dearest Miss Mitford, hearts feel differently, adjust themselves differently before the prick of sorrow, and I confess I agree with Robert. There are places stained with the blood of my heart for ever, and where I could not bear to stand again. If duty called him to New Cross it would be otherwise, but his sister is rather inclined to come to us, I think, for a few weeks in the autumn perhaps. Only these are scarcely times for plans concerning foreign travel. It is something to talk of. It has been a great disappointment to me the not going to England this year, but I could not run the risk of the bitter pain to him. May God bless you from all pain. Love me and write to me, who am ever and ever your affectionate

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Jameson

Bagni di Lucca: August 11, 1849.

I thank you, dearest friend, for your most affectionate and welcome letter would seem to come by instinct, and we have thanked you in our thoughts long before this moment, when I begin at last to write some of them. Do believe that to value your affection and to love you back again are parts of our life, and that it must be always delightful to us to read in your handwriting or to hear in your voice that we are not exiled from your life. Give us such an assurance whenever you can. Shall we not have it face to face at Florence, when the booksellers let you go? And meantime there is the post; do write to us. . . . Did you ever see this place, I wonder? The coolness, the charm of the mountains, whose very heart you seem to hear beating in

the rush of the little river, the green silence of the chestnut forests, and the seclusion which any one may make for himself by keeping clear of the valley-villages; all these things drew us. We took a delightful apartment over the heads of the whole world in the highest house of the Bagni Caldi, where only the donkeys and the *portantini* can penetrate, and where we sit at the open windows and hear nothing but the cicale. Not a mosquito! think of that! The thermometer ranges from sixty-eight to seventy-four, but the seventy-four has been a rare excess: the nights, mornings, and evenings are exquisitely cool. Robert and I go out and lose ourselves in the woods and mountains, and sit by the waterfalls on the starry and moonlit nights, and neither by night nor day have the fear of picnics before our eyes. We were observing the other day that we never met anybody except a monk girt with a rope, now and then, or a barefooted peasant. The sight of a pink parasol never startles us into unpleasant theories of comparative anatomy. One cause, perhaps, may be that on account of political matters it is a delightfully 'bad season,' but, also, we are too high for the ordinary walkers, who keep to the valley and the flatter roads. Robert is better, looking better, and in more healthy spirits; and we are both enjoying this great sea of mountains and our way of life here altogether. Of course, we remembered to go back to Florence for baby and the rest of our little establishment, and we mean to stay as long as we can, perhaps to the end of October. Baby is in the triumph of health and full-blown roses, and as he does not hide himself in the woods like his ancestors, but smiles at everybody, he is the most popular of possible babies. . . . We had him baptised before we left Florence, without godfathers and godmothers, in the simplicities of the French Lutheran Church. I gave him your kiss as a precious promise that you would love him one day like a true dear Aunt Nina; and I promise you on my part that he shall be taught to understand both the happiness and the honour of

it. Robert is expecting a visit from his sister in the course of this autumn. She has suffered much, and the change will be good for her, even if, as she says, she can stay with us only a few weeks. With her we shall have your book, to be disinherited of which so long has been hard on us. Robert's own we have not seen yet. It must be satisfactory to you to have had such a clear triumph after all the dust and toil of the way. And now tell me, won't it be *necessary* for you to come again to Italy for what remains to be done? Poor Florence is quiet enough under the heel of Austria, and Leopold 'l' intrepido,' as he was happily called by a poet of Viareggio in a welcoming burst of inspiration, sits undisturbed at the Pitti. I despair of the republic in Italy, or rather of Italy altogether. The instructed are not patriotic, and the patriots are not instructed. We want not only a *man*, but men, and we must throw, I fear, the bones of their race behind us before the true deliverers can spring up. Still, it is not all over; there will be deliverance presently, but it will not be now. We are full of painful sympathy for poor Venice. There! why write more about politics? It makes us sick enough to think of Austrians in our Florence without writing the thought out into greater expansion. Only don't let the 'Times' newspaper persuade you that there is no stepping with impunity out of England. . . . We have 'lectures on Shakespeare' just now by a Mr. Stuart, who is enlightening the English barbarians at the lower village, and quoting Mrs. Jameson to make his discourse more brilliant. We like to hear 'Mrs. Jameson observes.' Give our love to dear Gerardine. I am anxious for her happiness and yours involved in it. Love and remember us, dearest friend.

Your E. B. B., or rather, Ba.

The following note is added in Mr. Browning's handwriting:

Dear Aunt Nina,—Will there be three years before I see you again? And Geddie; does she not come to Italy? When we passed through Pisa the other day, we went to your old inn in love of you, and got your very room to dine in (the landlord is dead and gone, as is Peveruda—of the other house, you remember). There were the old vile prints, the old look-out into the garden, with its orange trees and painted sentinel watching them. Ba must have told you about our babe, and the little else there is to tell—that is, for *her* to tell, for she is not likely to encroach upon *my* story which I *could* tell of her entirely angel nature, as divine a heart as God ever made; I know more of her every day; I, who thought I knew something of her five years ago! I think I know you, too, so I love you and am

Ever yours and dear Geddie's

R. B.

To Miss Mitford

Bagni di Lucca: August 31, 1849.

I told Mr. Lever what you thought of him, dearest friend, and then he said, all in a glow and animation, that you were not only his own delight but the delight of his children, which is affection by refraction, isn't it? Quite gratified he seemed by the hold of your good opinion. Not only is he the notability *par excellence* of these baths of Lucca, where he has lived a whole year, during the snows upon the mountains, but he presides over the weekly balls at the casino where the English 'do congregate' (all except Robert and me), and is said to be the light of the flambeaux and the spring of the dancers. There is a general desolation when he *will* retire to play whist. In addition to which he really seems to be loving and loveable in his family. You always see him with his children and his wife; he drives her and her baby up and down along the only carriageable road of Lucca: so set down that piece of

domestic life on the bright side in the broad charge against married authors; now do. I believe he is to return to Florence this winter with his family, having had enough of the mountains. Have you read 'Roland Cashel,' isn't *that* the name of his last novel? The 'Athenæum' said of it that it was '*new ground*,' and praised it. I hear that he gets a hundred pounds for each monthly number. Oh, how glad I was to have your letter, written in such pain, read in such pleasure! It was only fair to tell me in the last lines that the face ache was better, to keep off a fit of remorse. I do hope that Mr. May is not right about neuralgia, because that is more difficult to cure than pain which arises from the teeth. Tell me how you are in all ways. I look into your letters eagerly for news of your health, then of your spirits, which are a part of health. The cholera makes me very frightened for my dearest people in London, and silence, the last longer than usual, ploughs up my days and nights into long furrows. The disease rages in the neighbourhood of my husband's family, and though Wimpole Street has been hitherto clear, who can calculate on what may be? My head goes round to think of it. And papa, who *will* keep going into that horrible city! Even if my sisters and brothers should go into the country as every year, he will be left, he is no more movable than St. Paul's. My sister-in-law will probably not come to us as soon as she intended, through a consideration for her father, who ought not, Robert thinks, to stay alone in the midst of such contingencies, so perhaps we may go to seek her ourselves in the spring, if she does not seek us out before in Italy. God keep us all, and near to one another. Love runs dreadful risks in the world. Yet Love is, how much the best thing in the world? We have had a great event in our house. Baby has cut a tooth. . . . His little happy laugh is always ringing through the rooms. He is afraid of nobody or nothing in the world, and was in fits of ecstasy at the tossing of the horse's head, when he rode

on Wilson's knee five or six miles the other day to a village in the mountains — screaming for joy, she said. He is not six months yet by a fortnight! His father loves him passionately, and the sentiment is reciprocated, I assure you. We have had the coolest of Italian summers at these Baths of Lucca, the thermometer at the hottest hour of the hottest day only at seventy-six, and generally at sixty-eight or seventy. The nights invariably cool. Now the freshness of the air is growing almost too fresh. I only hope we shall be able (for the cold) to keep our intention of staying here till the end of October, I have enjoyed it so entirely, and shall be so sorry to break off this happy silence into the Austrian drums at poor Florence. And then we want to see the vintage. Some grapes are ripe already, but it is not vintage time. We have every kind of good fruit, great water-melons, which with both arms I can scarcely carry, at twopence halfpenny each, and figs and peaches cheap in proportion. And the place agrees with Baby, and has done good to my husband's spirits, though the only 'amusement' or distraction he has is looking at the mountains and climbing among the woods with me. Yes, we have been reading some French romances, 'Monte Cristo,' for instance, I for the second time — but I have liked it, to read it with him. That Dumas certainly has power; and to think of the scramble there was for his brains a year or two ago in Paris! For a man to write so much and so well together is a miracle. Do you mean that they have left off writing — those French writers — or that they have tired you out with writing that looks faint beside the rush of facts, as the range of French politics show those? Has not Eugene Sue been illustrating the passions? Somebody told me so. Do *you* tell me how you like the French president, and whether he will ever, in your mind, sit on Napoleon's throne. It seems to me that he has given proof, as far as the evidence goes, of prudence, integrity, and conscientious patriotism; the situation is difficult, and he fills it honorably. The

Rome business has been miserably managed; this is the great blot on the character of his government. But I, for my own part (my husband is not so minded), do consider that the French motive has been good, the intention pure, the occupation of Rome by the Austrians being imminent and the French intervention the only means (with the exception of a European war) of saving Rome from the hoof of the Absolutists. At the same time if Pius IX. is the obstinate idiot he seems to be, good and tenderhearted man as he surely is, and if the old abuses are to be restored, why Austria might as well have done her own dirty work and saved French hands from the disgrace of it. It makes us two very angry. Robert especially is furious. We are not within reach of the book you speak of, 'Portraits des Orateurs Français;' oh, we might nearly as well live on a desert island as far as modern books go. And here, at Lucca, even Robert can't catch sight of even the 'Athenæum.' We have a two-day old 'Galignani,' and think ourselves royally off; and then this little shop with French books in it, just a few, and the 'Gentilhomme Campagnard' the latest published. Yes, but somebody lent us the first volume of 'Chateaubriand's Memoires.' Have you seen it? Curiously uninteresting, considering 'the man and the hour.' He writes of his youth with a grey goose-quill; the paper is all wrinkled. And then he is not frank; he must have more to tell than he tells. I looked for a more intense and sincere book *outre tombe* certainly. I am busy about my new edition, that is all at present, but some things are written. Good of Mr. Chorley (he is *good*) to place you face to face with Robert's books, and I am glad you like 'Colombe' and 'Luria.' Dear Mr. Kenyon's poems we have just received and are about to read, and I am delighted at a glance to see that he has inserted the 'Gipsy Carol,' which in MS. was such a favourite of mine. Really, is he so rich? I am glad of it, if he is. Money could not be in more generous and intelligent

hands. Dearest Miss Mitford, you are only just in being trustful of my affection for you. Never do I forget nor cease to love you. Write and tell me of your dear self; how you are *exactly*, and whether you have been at Three Mile Cross all the summer. May God bless you. Robert's regards. Can you read? Love a little your

Ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Jameson

Bagni di Lucca: October 1, [1849].*

There seems to be a fatality about our letters, dearest friend, only the worst fate comes to me! I lose, and you are *near* losing! And I should not have liked you to lose any least proof of my thinking of you, lest a worse loss should happen to me as a consequence, even worse than the loss of your letters; for then, perhaps, and by degrees you might leave off thinking of Robert and me, which, rich as we are in this mortal world, I do assure you we could neither of us afford. . . . We have had much quiet enjoyment here in spite of everything, read some amusing books (Dumas and Sue — shake your head!), and seen our child grow fuller of roses and understanding day by day. Before he was six months old he would stretch out his hands and his feet too, when bidden to do so, and his little mouth to kiss you. This is said to be a miracle of forwardness among the learned. He knows Robert and me quite well as 'Papa' and 'Mama,' and laughs for joy when he meets us out of doors. Robert is very fond of him, and threw me into a fit of hilarity the other day by springing away from his newspaper in an indignation against me because he hit his head against the floor rolling over and over. 'Oh, Ba, I really can't trust you!' Down Robert was on the carpet in a moment, to protect the precious head. He takes it to be made of Venetian glass, I am certain.

We may leave this place much sooner than the end of October, as everything depends upon the coming in of the cold. It will be the end of October, won't it, before Gerardine can reach Florence? I wish I knew. We have made an excursion into the mountains, five miles deep, with all our household, baby and all, on horseback and donkeyback, and people open their eyes at our having performed such an exploit — I and the child. Because it is five miles straight up the Duomo; you wonder how any horse could keep its footing, the way is so precipitous, up the exhausted torrent courses, and with a palm's breadth between you and the headlong ravines. Such scenery. Such a congregation of mountains: looking alive in the stormy light we saw them by. We dined with the goats, and baby lay on my shawl rolling and laughing. He wasn't in the least tired, not he! I won't say so much for myself. The Mr. Stuart who lectured here on Shakespeare (I think I told you that) couldn't get through a lecture without quoting you, and wound up by a declaration that no English critic had done so much for the divine poet as a woman — Mrs. Jameson. He appears to be a cultivated and refined person, and especially versed in German criticism, and we mean to *use* his society a little when we return to Florence, where he resides. . . . What am I to say about Robert's idleness and mine? I scold him about it in a most anti-conjugal manner, but, you know, his spirits and nerves have been shaken of late; we must have patience. As for me, I am much better, and do something, really, now and then. Wait, and you shall have us both on you; too soon, perhaps. May God bless you. How are your friends? Lady Byron, Madame de Goethe. The dreadful cholera has made us anxious about England.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

Mr. Browning adds the following note:

Dear Aunt Nina, — Ba will have told you everything, and how we wish you and Geddie all manner of happiness. I hope we shall be in Florence when she passes through it. The place is otherwise distasteful to me, with the creeping curs and the floggers of the same. But the weather is breaking up here, and I suppose we ought to go back soon. Shall you indeed come to Italy next year? That will indeed be pleasant to expect. We hope to go to England in the spring. What comes of 'hoping,' however, we [know] by this time.

Ever yours affectionately,

R. B.

To Miss Mitford

Bagni di Lucca: October 2, 1849.

Thank you, my dearest Miss Mitford: It is great comfort to know that you are better, and that the cholera does not approach your neighbourhood. My brothers and sisters have gone to Worthing for a few weeks; and though my father (dearest Papa!) is not persuadeable, I fear, into joining them, yet it is something to know that the horrible pestilence is abating in London. Oh, it has made me so anxious: I have caught with such a frightened haste at the newspaper to read the 'returns,' leaving even such subjects as Rome and the President's letter to quite the last, as if they were indifferent, or, at most, bits of Mrs. Manning's murder. By the way and talking of murder, how do you account for the crown of wickedness which England bears just now over the heads of the nations, in murders of all kinds, by poison, by pistol, by knife? In this poor Tuscany, which has not brains enough to govern itself, as you observe, and as really I can't deny, there have been two murders (properly so called) since we came, just three years ago, one from jealousy and one from revenge (respectable motives compared to the advantages of the

burying societies!), and the horror on all sides was great, as if the crime were some rare prodigy, which, indeed, it is in this country. We have *no punishment of death* here, observe! The people are gentle, courteous, refined, and tender-hearted. What Balzac would call 'femmelete.' All Tuscany is 'Lucien' himself. The leaning to the artistic nature without the strength of genius implies demoralisation in most cases, and it is this which makes your 'good for nothing poets and poetesses,' about which I love so to battle with you. Genius, I maintain always, you know, is a purifying power and goes with high moral capacities. Well, and so you invite us home to civilisation and 'the "Times" newspaper.' We *mean* to go next spring, and shall certainly do so unless something happen to catch us and keep us in a net. But always something does happen: and I have so often built upon seeing England, and been precipitated from the fourth storey, that I have learnt to think warily now. I hunger and thirst for the sight of some faces; must I not long, do you think, to see your face? And then, I shall be properly proud to show my child to those who loved me before him. He is beginning to understand everything — chiefly in Italian, of course, as his nurse talks in her sleep, I fancy, and can't be silent a second in the day — and when told to 'dare un bacio a questo povero Flush,' he mixes his little face with Flush's ears in a moment. . . . You would wonder to see Flush just now. He suffered this summer from the climate somewhat as usual, though not nearly as much as usual; and having been insulted oftener than once by a supposition of 'mange,' Robert wouldn't bear it any longer (he is as fond of Flush as I am), and, taking a pair of scissors, clipped him all over into the likeness of a lion, much to his advantage in both health and appearance. In the winter he is always quite well; but the heat and the fleas together are too much in the summer. The affection between baby and him is not equal, baby's love being far the stronger.

He, on the other hand, looks down upon baby. What bad news you tell me of our French writers! What! Is it possible that Dumas even is struck dumb by the revolution? His first works are so incomparably the worst that I can't admit your theory of the 'first runnings.' So of Balzac. So of Sue! George Sand is probably writing 'banners' for the 'Reds,' which, considering the state of parties in France, does not really give me a higher opinion of her intelligence or virtue. Ledru Rollin's[1] *confidante* and councillor can't occupy an honorable position, and I am sorry, for her sake and ours. When we go to Florence we must try to get the 'Portraits' and Lamartine's autobiography, which I still more long to see. So, two women were in love with him, were they? That must be a comfort to look back upon, now, when nobody will have him. I see by extracts from his newspaper in Galignani that he can't be accused of temporising with the Socialists any longer, whatever other charge may be brought against him: and if, as he says, it was he who made the French republic, he is by no means irreproachable, having made a bad and false thing. The President's letter about Rome[2] has delighted us. A letter worth writing and reading! We read it first in the Italian papers (long before it was printed in Paris), and the amusing thing was that where he speaks of the 'hostile influences' (of the cardinals) they had misprinted it '*orribili* influenze,' which must have turned still colder the blood in the veins of Absolutist readers. The misprint was not corrected until long after — more than a week, I think. The Pope is just a pope; and, since you give George Sand credit for having known it, I am the more vexed that Blackwood (under 'orribili influenze') did not

[1] Minister of the Interior in the Republic of 1848, and one of the most prominent of the advanced Republican leaders.

[2] A letter, addressed to a private friend but intended to be made public, denouncing the reactionary and oppressive administration of the restored Pope.

publish the poem I wrote two years ago,[1] in the full glare and burning of the Pope-enthusiasm, which Robert and I never caught for a moment. Then, *I* might have passed a little for a prophetess as well as George Sand! Only, to confess a truth, the same poem would have proved how fairly I was taken in by our Tuscan Grand Duke. Oh, the traitor!

I saw the 'Ambarvalia'[2] reviewed somewhere — I fancy in the 'Spectator' — and was not much struck by the extracts. They may, however, have been selected without much discrimination, and probably were. I am very glad that you like the gipsy carol in dear Mr. Kenyon's volume, because it is, and was in MS., a great favorite of mine. There are excellent things otherwise, as must be when he says them: one of the most radiant of benevolences with one of the most refined of intellects! How the paper seems to dwindle as I would fain talk on more. I have performed a great exploit, ridden on a donkey five miles deep into the mountains to an almost inaccessible volcanic ground not far from the stars. Robert on horseback, and Wilson and the nurse (with baby) on other donkeys; guides, of course. We set off at eight in the morning and returned at six P.M., after dining on the mountain pinnacle, I dreadfully tired, but the child laughing as usual, and burnt brick-colour for all bad effect. No horse or ass, untrained to the mountains, could have kept foot a moment where we penetrated, and even as it was one could not help the natural thrill. No road except the bed of exhausted torrents above and through the chestnut forests, and precipitous beyond what you would think possible for ascent or descent. Ravines tearing the ground to pieces under your feet. The scenery, sublime and wonderful, satisfied us wholly, however, as we looked round on the world of innumerable mountains bound faintly with the grey sea, and not a human habitation. I hope you will go

[1] Probably the first part of *Casa Guidi Windows*.

[2] By A. H. Clough and T. Burbidge.

to London this winter; it will be good for you, it seems to me. Take care of yourself, my much and ever loved friend! I love you and think of you indeed. Write of your health, remembering this,

And your affectionate,

E. B. B.

My husband's regards always. You had better, I think, direct to *Florence*, as we shall be there in the course of October.

To Florence, accordingly, they returned in October, and settled down once more in Casa Guidi for the winter. Mrs. Browning's principal literary occupation at this time was the preparation of a new edition of her poems, including nearly all the contents of the 'Seraphim' volume of 1838, more or less revised, as well as the 'Poems' of 1844. This edition, published in 1850, has formed the basis of all subsequent editions of her poems. Meanwhile her husband was engaged in the preparation of 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day,' which was also published in the course of 1850.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 1, 1849.

My ever loved friend, you will have wondered at this unusual silence; and so will my sisters to whom I wrote just now, after a pause as little in my custom. It was not the fault of my head and heart, but of this unruly body, which has been laid up again in the way of all flesh of mine. . . .

I am well again now, only obliged to keep quiet and give up my grand walking excursions, which poor Robert used to be so boastful of. If he is vain about anything in the world, it is about my improved health, and I used to say to him, 'But you needn't talk so much to people of how your wife walked here with you and there with you, as if a wife with a pair of feet was a miracle of nature.' Now

the poor feet have fallen into their old ways again. Ah, but if God pleases it won't be for long. . . .

The American authoress, Miss Fuller, with whom we had had some slight intercourse by letter, and who has been at Rome during the siege, as a devoted friend of the republicans and a meritorious attendant on the hospitals, has taken us by surprise at Florence, retiring from the Roman field with a husband and child above a year old. Nobody had even suspected a word of this underplot, and her American friends stood in mute astonishment before this apparition of them here. The husband is a Roman marquis, appearing amiable and gentlemanly, and having fought well, they say, at the siege, but with no pretension to cope with his wife on any ground appertaining to the intellect. She talks, and he listens. I always wonder at that species of marriage; but people are so different in their matrimonial ideals that it may answer sometimes. This Mdme. Ossoli saw George Sand in Paris — was at one of her soirées — and called her 'a magnificent creature.' The soirée was 'full of rubbish' in the way of its social composition, which George Sand likes, *nota bene*. If Mdme. Ossoli called it '*rubbish*,' it must have been really rubbish — not expressing anything conventionally so — she being one of the out and out *Reds* and scorners of grades of society. She said that she did not see Balzac. Balzac went into the world scarcely at all, frequenting the lowest cafés, so that it was difficult to track him out. Which information I receive doubtingly. The rumours about Balzac with certain parties in Paris are not likely to be too favorable nor at all reliable, I should fancy; besides, I never entertain disparaging thoughts of my demi-gods unless they should be forced upon me by evidence, you must know. I have not made a demi-god of Louis Napoleon, by the way — no, and I don't mean it. I expect some better final result than he has just proved himself to be of the French Revolution, with all its bitter and cruel

consequences hitherto, so I can't quite agree with you. Only so far, that he has shown himself up to this point to be an upright man with noble impulses, and that I give him much of my sympathy and respect in the difficult position held by him. A man of genius he does not seem to be — and what, after all, will he manage to do at Rome? I don't take up the frantic Republican cry in Italy. I know too well the want of knowledge and the consequent want of effective faith and energy among the Italians; but there is a stain upon France in the present state of the Roman affair, and I don't shut my eyes to that either. To cast Rome helpless and bound into the hands of the priests is dishonor to the actors, however we consider the act; and for the sake of France, even more than for the sake of Italy, I yearn to see the act cancelled. Oh, we have had the sight of Clough and Burbidge, at last. Clough has more thought, Burbidge more music; but I am disappointed in the book on the whole. What I like infinitely better is Clough's 'Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich,' a 'long vacation pastoral,' written in loose and more-than-need-be unmusical hexameters, but full of vigour and freshness, and with passages and indeed whole scenes of great beauty and eloquence. It seems to have been written before the other poems. Try to get it, if you have not read it already. I feel certain you will like it and think all the higher of the poet. Oh, it strikes both Robert and me as being worth twenty of the other little book, with its fragmentary, dislocated, unartistic character. Arnold's volume has two good poems in it: 'The Sick King of Bokhara' and 'The Deserted Merman.' I like them both. But none of these writers are *artists*, whatever they may be in future days. Have you read 'Shirley,' and is it as good as 'Jane Eyre'? We heard not long since that Mr. Chorley had discovered the author, *the* 'Currer Bell.' A woman, most certainly. We hear, too, that three large editions of the 'Princess' are sold. So much the happier for England and poetry.

Dearest dear Miss Mitford, mind you write to me, and don't pay me out in my own silence! *You* have not been ill, I hope and trust. Write and tell me every little thing of yourself — how you are, and whether there is still danger of your being uprooted from Three Mile Cross. I love and think of you always. Fancy Flush being taken in the light of a rival by baby! Oh, baby was quite jealous the other day, and struggled and kicked to get to me because he saw Flush leaning his pretty head on my lap. There's a great strife for privileges between those two. May God bless you! My husband's kind regards always, while I am your most

Affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: January 9, 1850.

Thank you, ever dearest Miss Mitford, for this welcome letter written on your birthday! May the fear of small-pox have passed away long before now, and every hope and satisfaction have strengthened and remained! . . .

May God bless you and give you many happy years, you who can do so much towards the happiness of others. May I not answer for my own? . . .

Little Wiedeman began to crawl on Christmas Day. Before, he used to roll. We throw things across the floor and he crawls for them like a little dog, on all fours. . . .

He has just caught a cold, which I make more fuss about than I ought, say the wise; but I can't get resigned to the association of any sort of suffering with his laughing dimpled little body — it is the blowing about in the wind of such a heap of roses. So you prefer 'Shirley' to 'Jane Eyre'! Yet I hear from nobody such an opinion; yet you are very probably right, for 'Shirley' may suffer from the natural reaction of the public mind. What you tell me of Tennyson interests me as everything about him must. I

like to think of him digging gardens — room for cabbage and all. At the same time, what he says about the public '*hating* poetry' is certainly not a word for Tennyson. Perhaps no true poet, having claims upon attention *solely* through his poetry, has attained so certain a success with such short delay. Instead of being pelted (as nearly every true poet has been), he stands already on a pedestal, and is recognised as a master spirit not by a coterie but by the great public. Three large editions of the 'Princess' have already been sold. If he isn't satisfied after all, I think he is wrong. Divine poet as he is, and no laurel being too leafy for him, yet he must be an unreasonable man, and not understanding of the growth of the laurel trees and the nature of a reading public. With regard to the other garden-digger, dear Mr. Horne, I wish as you do that I could hear something satisfactory of him. I wrote from Lucca in the summer, and have no answer. The latest word concerning him is the announcement in the 'Athenæum' of a third edition of his 'Gregory the Seventh,' which we were glad to see, but very, very glad we should be to have news of his prosperity in the flesh as well as in the *litteræ scriptæ*. . . .

I have not been out of doors these two months, but people call me 'looking well;' and a newly married niece of Miss Bayley's, the accomplished Miss Thomson, who has become the wife of Dr. Emil Braun (the learned German secretary of the Archæological Society), and just passed through Florence on her way to Rome, where they are to reside, declared that the change she saw in me was miraculous — 'wonderful indeed.' I took her to look at Wiedeman in his cradle, fast asleep, and she won my heart (over again, for always she was a favorite of mine) by exclaiming at his prettiness. Charmed, too, we both were with Dr. Braun — I mean Robert and I were charmed. He has a mixture of fervour and simplicity which is still more delightfully picturesque in his foreign English. Oh, he speaks English

perfectly, only with an obvious accent enough. I am sure we should be cordial friends, if the lines had fallen to us in the same pleasant places; but he is fixed at Rome, and we are half afraid of the enervating effects of the Roman climate on the constitutions of children. Tell me, do you hear often from Mr. Chorley? It quite pains us to observe from his manner of writing the great depression of his spirits. His mother was ill in the summer, but plainly the sadness does not arise entirely or chiefly from this cause. He seems to me over-worked, taxed in the spirit. I advise nobody to give up work; but that 'Athenæum' labour is a sort of treadmill discipline in which there is no progress, nor triumph, and I do wish he would give that up and come out to us with a new set of anvils and hammers. Only, of course, he couldn't do it, even if he would, while there is illness in his family. May there be a whole sun of success shining on the new play! Robert is engaged on a poem,[1] and I am busy with my edition. So much to correct, I find, and many poems to add. Plainly 'Jane Eyre' was by a woman. It used to astound me when sensible people said otherwise. Write to me, will you? I long to hear again. Tell me everything of yourself; accept my husband's true regards, and think of me as your

Ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Browning

Florence: January 29, 1850.

My dearest Sarianna, — I have waited to thank you for your great and ready kindness about the new edition, until now when it is fairly on its way to England. Thank you, thank you! I am only afraid, not that you will find anything too 'learned,' as you suggest, but a good many things too careless, I was going to say, only Robert, with various deep sighs for 'his poor Sarianna,' devoted himself during several

[1] *Christmas Eve and Easter Day.*

days to rearranging my arrangements, and simplifying my complications. It was the old story of Order and Disorder over again. He pulled out the knotted silks with an indefatigable patience, so that really you will owe to *him* every moment of ease and facility which may be enjoyable in the course of the work. I am afraid that at the easiest you will find it a vexatious business, but I throw everything on your kindness, and am not distrustful on such a point of weights and measures.

Your letter was full of sad news. Robert was deeply affected at the account of the illness of his cousin — was in tears before he could end the letter. I do hope that in a day or two we may hear from you that the happy change was confirmed as time passed on. I do hope so; it will be joy, not merely to Robert, but to me, for indeed I never forget the office which his kindness performed for both of us at a crisis ripe with all the happiness of my life.

Then it was sad to hear of your dear father suffering from lumbago. May the last of it have passed away long before you get what I am writing. Tell him with my love that Wiedeman shall hear some day (if we all live) the verses he wrote to him; and I have it in my head that little Wiedeman will be very sensitive to verses and kindness too — he likes to hear anything rhythmical and musical, and he likes to be petted and kissed — the most affectionate little creature he is — sitting on my knee, while I give him books to turn the leaves over (a favorite amusement), every two minutes he puts up his little rosebud of a mouth to have a kiss. His cold is quite gone, and he has taken advantage of the opportunity to grow still fatter; as to his activities, there's no end to them. His nurse and I agree that he doesn't remain quiet a moment in the day.[1] . . .

[1] A long description of the baby's meals and daily programme follows, the substance of which can probably be imagined by connoisseurs in the subject.

Now the love of nephews can't bear any more, Sarianna, can it? Only your father will take my part and say that it isn't tedious — beyond pardoning.

May God bless both of you, and enable you to send a brighter letter next time. Robert will be very anxious.

Your ever affectionate sister

BA.

Mention yourself, *do*.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: February 18, 1850.

Ever dearest Miss Mitford, you *always* give me pleasure, so for love's sake don't say that you 'seldom give it,' and such a magical act as conjuring up for me the sight of a new poem by Alfred Tennyson[1] is unnecessary to prove you a right beneficent enchantress. Thank you, thank you. We are not so unworthy of your redundant kindness as to abuse it by a word spoken or sign signified. You may trust us indeed. But now you know how free and sincere I am always! Now tell me. Apart from the fact of this lyric's being a fragment of fringe from the great poet's 'singing clothes' (as Leigh Hunt says somewhere), and apart from a certain sweetness and rise and fall in the rhythm, do you really see much for admiration in the poem? Is it *new* in any way? I admire Tennyson with the most worshipping part of the multitude, as you are aware, but I do *not* perceive much in this lyric, which strikes me, and Robert also (who goes with me throughout), as quite inferior to the other lyrical snatches in the 'Princess.' By the way, if he introduces it in the 'Princess,' it will be the only *rhymed* verse in the work. Robert thinks that he was thinking of the Rhine echoes in writing it, and not of any heard in his

[1] Apparently the *Echo-song* which now precedes canto iv. of the *Princess*, though one is surprised at the opinion here expressed of it. It will be remembered that this and the other lyrical interludes did not appear in the original edition of the *Princess*.

Irish travels. I hear that Tennyson has taken rooms above Mr. Forster's in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and is going to try a London life. So says Mr. Kenyon. . . . I am writing with an easier mind than when I wrote last, for I was for a little time rendered very unhappy (so unhappy that I couldn't touch on the subject, which is always the way with me when pain passes a certain point), by hearing accidentally that papa was unwell and looking altered. My sister persisted in replying to my anxieties that they were unfounded, that I was quite absurd, indeed, in being anxious at all; only people are not generally reformed from their absurdities through being scolded for them. Now, however, it really appears that the evil has passed. He left his doctor who had given him lowering medicines, and, coincidently with the leaving, he has recovered looks and health altogether. Arabel says that I should think he was looking as well as ever, if I saw him, and that appetite and spirits are even redundant. Thank God. . . . To have this good news has made me very happy, and I overflow to you accordingly. Oh, there is pain enough from that quarter, without hearing of his being out of health. I write to him continually and he does not now return my letters, which is a melancholy something gained. Now enough of such a subject.

I certainly don't think that the qualities, half savage and half freethinking, expressed in 'Jane Eyre' are likely to suit a model governess or schoolmistress; and it amuses me to consider them in that particular relation. Your account falls like dew upon the parched curiosity of some of our friends here, to whom (as mere gossip, which did not leave you responsible) I couldn't resist the temptation of communicating it. People *are* so curious — even here among the Raffaels — about this particular authorship, yet nobody seems to have read 'Shirley'; we are too slow in getting new books. First Galignani has to pirate them himself, and then to hand us over the spoils. By the way, there's to be

an international copyright, isn't there? Something is talked of it in the 'Athenæum.' Meanwhile the Americans have already reprinted my husband's new edition. 'Landthieves, I mean pirates.' I used to take that for a slip of the pen in Shakespeare; but it was a slip of the pen into prophecy. Sorry I am at Mrs. —— falling short of your warm-hearted ideas about her! Can you understand a woman's hating a girl because it is not a boy — her first child too? I understand it so little that scarcely I can believe it. Some women *have*, however, undeniably an indifference to children, just as many men have, though it must be unnatural and morbid in both sexes. Men often affect it — very foolishly, if they count upon the scenic effects; affectation never succeeds well, and this sort of affectation is peculiarly unbecoming, except in old bachelors, for there is a pathetic side to the question so viewed. For my part and my husband's, we may be frank and say that we have caught up our parental pleasures with a sort of passion. But then, Wiedeman is such a darling little creature; who *could* help loving the child? . . . Little darling! So much mischief was not often put before into so small a body. Fancy the child's upsetting the water jugs till he is drenched (which charms him), pulling the brooms to pieces, and having serious designs upon cutting up his frocks with a pair of scissors. He laughs like an imp when he can succeed in doing anything wrong. Now, see what you get, in return for your kindness of 'liking to hear about' him! Almost I have the grace to be ashamed a little. Just before I had your letter we sent my new edition to England. I gave much time to the revision, and did not omit reforming some of the rhymes, although you must consider that the irregularity of these in a certain degree rather falls in with my system than falls out through my carelessness. So much the worse, you will say, when a person is *systematically* bad. The work will include the best poems of the Seraphim volume, strengthened and improved as far as the circum-

stances admitted of. I had not the heart to leave out the wretched sonnet to yourself, for your dear sake; but I rewrote the latter half of it (for really it wasn't a sonnet at all, and 'Una and her lion' are rococo), and so placed it with my other poems of the same class. There are some new verses also.[1] The Miss Hardings I have seen, and talked with them of *you*, a sure way of finding them delightful. But, my dearest friend, I shall not see any of the Trollope party — it is not likely. You can scarcely image to yourself the retired life we live, or how we have retreated from the kind advances of the English society here. Now people seem to understand that we are to be left alone; that nothing is to be made of us. The fact is, we are not like our child, who kisses everybody who smiles at him! Neither my health nor our pecuniary circumstances, nor our inclinations perhaps, would admit of our entering into English society here, which is kept up much after the old English models, with a proper disdain for continental simplicities of expense. We have just heard from Father Prout, who often, he says, sees Mr. Horne, 'who is as dreamy as ever.' So glad I am, for I was beginning to be uneasy about him. He has not answered my letter from Lucca. The verses in the 'Athenæum'[2] are on Sophia Cottrell's child.

May God bless you, dearest friend. Speak of *yourself* more particularly to your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

Robert's kindest regards. Tell us of Mr. Chorley's play, do.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: February 22, 1850.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Have you wondered that I did not write before? It was not that I did not thank

[1] Notably the *Sonnets from the Portuguese.*

[2] 'A Child's Death at Florence,' which appeared in the *Athenæum* of December 22, 1849.

you in my heart for your kind, considerate letter, but I was unconquerably uncomfortable about papa; and, what with the weather, which always has me in its power somehow, and other things, I fell into a dislike of writing, which I hope you didn't mistake for ingratitude, because it was not in the least like the same fault. Now the severe weather (such weather for Italy!) has broken up, and I am relieved in all ways, having received the most happy satisfactory news from Wimpole Street, and the assurance from my sisters that if I were to see papa I should think him looking as well as ever. He grew impatient with Dr. Elliotson's medicines — which, it appears, were of a very lowering character — suddenly gave them up, and as suddenly recovered his looks and all the rest, and everybody at home considers him to be *quite well*. It has relieved me of a mountain's weight, and I thank God with great joy. Oh, you must have understood how natural it was for me to be unhappy under the other circumstances. But if you thought, dearest friend, that *they* were necessary to induce me to write to him the humblest and most beseeching of letters, you do not know how I feel his alienation or my own love for him. With regard to my brothers, it is quite different, though even towards *them* I may faithfully say that my affection has borne itself higher than my pride. But as to papa, I have never contended about the right or the wrong, I have never irritated him by seeming to suppose that his severity to me has been more than justice. I have confined myself simply to a supplication for his forgiveness of what he called, in his own words, the only fault of my life towards him, and an expression of the love which even I must feel for him, whether he forgives me or not. This has been done in letter after letter, and they are not sent back — it is all. In my last letter, I ventured to ask him to let it be an understood thing that he should before the world, and to every practical purpose, act out his idea of justice by excluding me formally, me and mine, from every advantage

he intended his other children — that, having so been just, he might afford to be merciful by giving me his forgiveness and affection — all I asked and desired. My husband and I had talked this over again and again; only it was a difficult thing to say, you see. At last I took courage and said it, because, doing it, papa might seem to himself to reconcile his notion of strict justice, and whatever remains of pity and tenderness might still be in his heart towards me, if there are any such. I *know* he has strong feelings at bottom — otherwise, should I love him so? — but he has adopted a bad system, and he (as well as I) is crushed by it. . . . If I were to write to you the political rumours we hear every day, you would scarcely think our situation improved in safety by the horrible Austrian army. Florence bristles with cannon on all sides, and at the first movement we are promised to be bombarded. On the other hand, if the red republicans get uppermost there will be a universal massacre; not a priest, according to their own profession, will be left alive in Italy. The constitutional party hope they are gaining strength, but the progress which depends on intellectual growth must necessarily be slow. That the Papacy has for ever lost its prestige and power over souls is the only evident truth bright and strong enough to cling to. I hear even devout women say: 'This cursed Pope! it's all his fault.' Protestant places of worship are thronged with Italian faces, and the minister of the Scotch church at Leghorn has been threatened with exclusion from the country if he admits Tuscans to the church communion. Politically speaking, much will depend upon France, and I have strong hope for France, though it is so strictly the fashion to despair of her. Tell me dear Mr. Martin's impression and your own — everything is good that comes from you. But most *particularly*, tell me how you both are — tell me whether you are strong again, dearest Mrs. Martin, for indeed I do not like to hear of your being in the least like an invalid. Do speak

of yourself a little more. Do you know, you are very unsatisfactory as a letter-writer when you write about yourself — the reason being that you never do write about yourself except by the suddenest snatches, when you can't possibly help the reference. . . .

Robert sends his true regards with those of your

Gratefully affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

April 2, [1850].

You have perhaps thought us ungrateful people, my ever dear friend, for this long delay in thanking you for your beautiful and welcome present.[1] Here is the truth. Though we had the books from Rome last month, they were snatched from us by impatient hands before we had finished the first volume. The books are hungered and thirsted for in Florence, and, although the English reading club has them, they can't go fast enough from one to another. Four of our friends entreated us for the reversion, and although it really is only just that we should be let read our own books first, yet Robert's generosity can't resist the need of this person who is 'going away,' and of that person who is 'so particularly anxious' — for particular reasons perhaps — so we renounce the privilege you gave us (with the pomps of this world) and are still waiting to finish even the first volume. Our cultivated friends the Ogilvys, who had the work from us earliest, because they were going to Naples, were charmed with it. Mr. Kirkup the artist, who disputes with Mr. Bezzi the glory of finding Dante's portrait — yes, and breathes fire in the dispute — has it now. Madame Ossoli, Margaret Fuller, the American authoress, who brought from the siege of Rome a noble

[1] Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Monastic Order*, which had just been published.

marquis as her husband, asks for it. And your adorer Mr. Stuart, who has lectured upon Shakespeare all the winter, entreats for it. So when we shall be free to enjoy it thoroughly for ourselves remains doubtful: Robert promises every day, 'You shall have it next, certainly,' and I only hope you will put him and me in your next edition of the martyrs, for such a splendid exercise of the gifts of self-renunciation. But don't fancy that we have not been delighted with the sight of the books, with your kindness, and besides with the impressions gathered from a rapid examination of the qualities of the work. It seems to us in every way a valuable and most interesting work; it must render itself a *necessity* for art students, and general readers and seers of pictures like me, who carry rather sentiment than science into the consideration of such subjects. We much admire your introduction—excellent in all ways, besides the grace and eloquence. Altogether, the work must set you higher with a high class of the public, and I congratulate you on what is the gain of all of us. Robert has begun a little pencil list of trifling criticisms he means to finish. We both cry aloud at what you say of Guercino's angels, and never would have said if you had been to Fano and seen his divine picture of the 'Guardian Angel,' which affects me every time I think of it. Our little Wiedeman had his part of pleasure in the book by being let look at the engravings. He screamed for joy at the miracle of so many bird-men, and kissed some of them very reverentially, which is his usual way of expressing admiration. . . .

Whether you will like Robert's new book I don't know, but I am sure you will admit the originality and power in it. I wish we had the option of giving it to you, but Chapman & Hall never seem to think of our giving copies away, nor leave them at our disposal. There is nothing *Italian* in the book; poets are apt to be most present with the

distant. A remark of Wilson's[1] used to strike me as eminently true — that the perfectest descriptive poem (descriptive of rural scenery) would be naturally produced in a London cellar. I have read 'Shirley' lately; it is not equal to 'Jane Eyre' in spontaneousness and earnestness. I found it heavy, I confess, though in the mechanical part of the writing — the compositional *savoir faire* — there is an advance. Robert has exhumed some French books, just now, from a little circulating library which he had not tried, and we have been making ourselves uncomfortable over Balzac's 'Cousin Pons.' But what a wonderful writer he is! Who else could have taken such a subject, out of the lowest mud of humanity, and glorified and consecrated it? He is wonderful — there is not another word for him — profound, as Nature is. I complain of Florence for the want of books. We have to dig and dig before we can get anything new, and *I* can read the newspapers only through Robert's eyes, who only can read them at Vieusseux's in a room sacred from the foot of woman. And this isn't always satisfactory to me, as whenever he falls into a state of disgust with any political *régime*, he throws the whole subject over and won't read a word more about it. Every now and then, for instance, he ignores France altogether, and I, who am more tolerant and more curious, find myself suspended over an hiatus (*valde deflendus*), and what's to be said and done? M. Thiers' speech — 'Thiers is a rascal; I make a point of not reading one word said by M. Thiers.' M. Prudhon — 'Prudhon is a madman; who cares for Prudhon?' The President — 'The President's an ass; *he* is not worth thinking of.' And so we treat of politics.

I wish you would write to us a little oftener (or rather, a good deal) and tell us much of yourself. It made me very sorry that you should be suffering in the grief of your sister

[1] Presumably *not* Mrs. Browning's maid, but Christopher North.'

—you whose sympathies are so tender and quick! May it be better with you now! Mention Lady Byron. I shall be glad to hear that she is stronger notwithstanding this cruel winter. We have lovely weather here now, and I am quite well and able to walk out, and little Wiedeman rolls with Flush on the grass of the Cascine. Dear kind Wilson is doatingly fond of the child, and sometimes gives it as her serious opinion that 'there never *was* such a child before.' Of course I don't argue the point much. Now, will you write to us? Speak of your plans particularly when you do. We have taken this apartment on for another year from May. May God bless you! Robert unites in affectionate thanks and thoughts of all kinds, with your

E. B. B.—rather, Ba.

This letter has waited some days to be sent away, as you will see by the date.

At the end of March 1850, the long-deferred marriage of Mrs. Browning's sister, Henrietta, to Captain Surtees Cook took place. It is of interest here mainly as illustrating Mr. Barrett's behaviour to his daughters. An application for his consent only elicited the pronouncement, 'If Henrietta marries you, she turns her back on this house for ever,' and a letter to Henrietta herself reproaching her with the 'insult' she had offered him in asking his consent when she had evidently made up her mind to the conclusion, and declaring that, if she married, her name should never again be mentioned in his presence. The marriage having thereupon taken place, his decision was forthwith put into practice, and a second child was thenceforward an exile from her father's house.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: [end of] April 1850.

You will have seen in the papers, dearest friend, the marriage of my sister Henrietta, and will have understood

why I was longer silent than usual. Indeed, the event has much moved me, and so much of the emotion was painful — painfulness being inseparable from events of the sort in our family — that I had to make an effort to realise to myself the reasonable degree of gladness and satisfaction in her release from a long, anxious, transitional state, and her prospect of happiness with a man who has loved her constantly and who is of an upright, honest, reliable, and religious mind. Our father's objections were to his tractarian opinions and insufficient income. I have no sympathy myself with tractarian opinions, but I cannot under the circumstances think an objection of the kind tenable by a third person, and in truth we all know that if it had not been this objection, it would have been another — there was no escape any way. An engagement of five years and an attachment still longer were to have some results; and I can't regret, or indeed do otherwise than approve from my heart, what she has done from hers. Most of her friends and relatives have considered that there was no choice, and that her step is abundantly justified. At the same time, I thank God that a letter sent to me to ask my advice never reached me (the *second* letter of my sisters' lost, since I left them), because no advice *ought* to be given on any subject of the kind, and because I, especially, should have shrunk from accepting such a responsibility. So I only heard of the marriage three days before it took place — no, four days before — and was upset, as you may suppose, by the sudden news. Captain Surtees Cook's sister was one of the bridesmaids, and his brother performed the ceremony. The *means* are very small of course — he has not much, and my sister has nothing — still it seems to me that they will have enough to live prudently on, and he looks out for a further appointment. Papa 'will never again let her name be mentioned in his hearing,' he *says*, but we must hope. The dreadful business passed off better on the whole than poor Arabel expected, and things are going on as quietly as usual in Wimpole Street now. I feel deeply for

her, who in her pure disinterestedness just pays the price and suffers the loss. She represents herself, however, to be relieved at the crisis being passed. I earnestly hope for her sake that we may be able to get to England this year—a sight of us will be some comfort. Henrietta is to live at Taunton for the present, as he has a military situation there, and they are preparing for a round of visits among their many friends who are anxious to have them previous to their settling. All this, you see, will throw me back with papa, even if I can be supposed to have gained half a step, and I doubt it. Oh yes, dearest Miss Mitford. I have indeed again and again thought of your 'Emily,' stripping the situation of 'the favour and prettiness' associated with that heroine. Wiedeman might compete, though, in darlingness with the child, as the poem shows him. Still, I can accept no omen. My heart sinks when I dwell upon peculiarities difficult to analyse. I love him very deeply. When I write to him, I lay myself at his feet. Even if I had gained half a step (and I doubt it, as I said), see how I must be thrown back by the indisposition to receive others. But I cannot write of this subject. Let us change it. . . .

Madame Ossoli sails for America in a few days, with the hope of returning to Italy, and indeed I cannot believe that her Roman husband will be easily naturalised among the Yankees. A very interesting person she is, far better than her writings — thoughtful, spiritual in her habitual mode of mind; not only exalted, but *exaltée* in her opinions, and yet calm in manner. We shall be sorry to lose her. We have lost, besides, our friends Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvy, cultivated and refined people; they occupied the floor above us the last winter, and at the Baths of Lucca and Florence we have seen much of them for a year past. She published some time since a volume of 'Scottish Minstrelsy,' graceful and flowing, and aspires strenuously towards poetry; a pretty woman with three pretty children, of quick perceptions and active intelligence and sensibility. They are upright,

excellent people in various ways, and it is a loss to us that they should have gone to Naples now. Dearest friend, how your letter delighted me with its happy account of your improved strength. Take care of yourself, do, to lose no ground. The power of walking must refresh your spirits as well as widen your daily pleasures. I am so glad. Thank God. We have heard from Mr. Chorley, who seems to have received very partial gratification in respect to his play and yet prepares for more plays, more wrestlings in the same dust. Well, I can't make it out. A man of his sensitiveness to choose to appeal to the coarsest side of the public — which, whatever you dramatists may say, you all certainly do — is incomprehensible to me. Then I cannot help thinking that he might achieve other sorts of successes more easily and surely. Your criticism is very just. But *I* like his 'Music and Manners in Germany' better than anything he has done. I believe I always *did* like it best, and since coming to Florence I have heard cultivated Americans speak of it with enthusiasm, yes, with enthusiasm. 'Pomfret' they would scarcely believe to be by the same author. I agree with you, but it is a pity indeed for him to tie himself to the wheels of the 'Athenæum,' to *approfondir* the ruts; what other end? And, by the way, the 'Athenæum,' since Mr. Dilke left it, has grown duller and duller, colder and colder, flatter and flatter. Mr. Dilke was not brilliant, but he was a Brutus in criticism; and though it was his speciality to condemn his most particular friends to the hangman, the survivors thought there was something grand about it on the whole, and nobody could hold him in contempt. Now it is all different. We have not even 'public virtue' to fasten our admiration to. You will be sure to think I am vexed at the article on my husband's new poem.[1]

[1] The *Athenæum* review of *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, while recognising the beauty of many passages in the two poems, criticised strongly the discussion of theological subjects in 'doggrel verse;' and its analysis of the theology would hardly be satisfactory to the author.

Why, certainly I am vexed! Who would *not* be vexed with such misunderstanding and mistaking. Dear Mr. Chorley writes a letter to appreciate most generously: so you see how little power he has in the paper to insert an opinion, or stop an injustice. On the same day came out a burning panegyric of six columns in the 'Examiner,' a curious cross-fire. If you read the little book (I wish I could send you a copy, but Chapman & Hall have not offered us copies, and you will catch sight of it somewhere), I hope you will like things in it at least. It seems to me full of power. Two hundred copies went off in the first fortnight, which is a good beginning in these days. So I am to confess to a satisfaction in the American piracies. Well, I confess, then. Only it is rather a complex smile with which one hears: 'Sir or Madam, we are selling your book at half price, as well printed as in England.' 'Those apples we stole from your garden, we sell at a halfpenny, instead of a penny as you do; they are much appreciated.' Very gratifying indeed. It's worth while to rob us, that's plain, and there's something magnificent in supplying a distant market with apples out of one's garden. Still the smile is complex in its character, and the morality—simple, that's all I meant to say. A letter from Henrietta and her husband, glowing with happiness; it makes *me* happy. She says, 'I wonder if I shall be as happy as you, Ba.' God grant it. It was signified to her that she should at once give up her engagement of five years, or leave the house. She married directly. I do not understand how it could be otherwise, indeed. My brothers have been kind and affectionate, I am glad to say; in her case, poor dearest papa does injustice chiefly to his own nature, by these severities, hard as they seem. Write soon and talk of yourself to

Ever affectionate

Ba.

I am rejoicing in the People's Edition of your work, 'Viva!' (Robert's best regards.)

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: May 4, [1850].

Dearest Friend, — This little note will be given to you by the Mr. Stuart of whom I once told you that he was holding you up to the admiration of all Florence and the Baths of Lucca as the best English critic of Shakespeare, in his lectures on the great poet. . . .

Robert bids me say that he wrote you a constrained half-dozen lines by Mr. Henry Greenough, who asked for a letter of introduction to you, while the asker was sitting in the room, and the form of 'dear Mrs. Jameson' couldn't well be escaped from. He loves you as well as ever, you are to understand, through every complication of forms, and you are to love him, and *me*, for I come in as a part of him, if you please. Did you get my thanks for the dear Petrarch pen (so steeped in double-distilled memories that it seems scarcely fit to be steeped in ink), and our appreciation as well as gratitude for the books — which, indeed, charm us more and more? Robert has been picking up pictures at a few pauls each, 'hole and corner' pictures which the 'dealers' had not found out; and the other day he covered himself with glory by discovering and seizing on (in a corn shop a mile from Florence) five pictures among heaps of trash; and one of the best judges in Florence (Mr. Kirkup) throws out such names for them as Cimabue, Ghirlandaio, Giottino, a crucifixion painted on a banner, Giottesque, if not Giotto, but *unique*, or nearly so, on account of the linen material, and a little Virgin by a Byzantine master. The curious thing is that two angel pictures, for which he had given a scudo last year, prove to have been each sawn off the sides of the Ghirlandaio, so called, representing the 'Eterno Padre' clothed in a mystical garment and encircled by a rainbow, the various tints of which, together with the scarlet tips of the flying seraphs' wings, are darted down into the smaller pictures

and complete the evidence, line for line. It has been a grand altar-piece, cut to bits. Now come and see for yourself. We can't say decidedly yet whether it will be possible or impossible for us to go to England this year, but in any case you must come to see Gerardine and Italy, and we shall manage to catch you by the skirts then — so do come. Never mind the rumbling of political thunders, because, even if a storm breaks, you will slip under cover in these days easily, whether in France or Italy. I can't make out, for my part, how anybody can be afraid of such things.

Will you be among the likers or dislikers, I wonder sometimes, of Robert's new book? The *faculty*, you will recognise, in all cases; he can do anything he chooses. I have complained of the *asceticism* in the second part, but he said it was 'one side of the question.' Don't think that he has taken to the cilix — indeed he has not — but it is his way to *see* things as passionately as other people *feel* them. . . .

Chapman & Hall offer us no copies, or you should have had one, of course. So Wordsworth is gone — a great light out of heaven.

May God bless you, my dear friend!

Love your affectionate and grateful, for so many reasons,

BA.

The death of Wordsworth on April 23 left the Laureateship vacant, and though there was probably never any likelihood of Mrs. Browning's being invited to succeed him, it is worth noticing that her claims were advocated by so prominent a paper as the 'Athenæum,' which not only urged that the appointment would be eminently suitable under a female sovereign, but even expressed its opinion that 'there is no living poet of either sex who can prefer a higher claim than Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning.' No doubt there would have been a certain appropriateness in

the post of Laureate to a Queen being held by a poetess, but the claims of Tennyson to the primacy of English poetry were rightly regarded as paramount. The fact that in Robert Browning there was a poet of equal calibre with Tennyson, though of so different a type, seems to have occurred to no one.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: June 15, 1850.

My ever dear Friend, — How it grieves me that you should have been so unwell again! From what you say about the state of the house, I conclude that your health suffers from that cause precisely; and that when you are warmly and dryly walled in, you will be less liable to these attacks, grievous to your friends as to you. Oh, I don't praise anybody, I assure you, for wishing to entice you to live near them. We come over the Alps for a sunny climate; what should we not do for a moral atmosphere like yours? I dare say you have chosen excellently your new residence, and I hope you will get over the fuss of it with great courage, remembering the advantages which it is likely to secure to you. Tell me as much as you can about it all, that I may shift the scene in the right grooves, and be able to imagine you to myself out of Three Mile Cross. You have the local feeling so eminently that I have long been resolved on never asking you to migrate. Doves won't travel with swallows; who should persuade them? This is no migration — only a shifting from one branch to another. With Reading on one side of you still, you will lose nothing, neither sight nor friend. Oh, do write to me as soon as you can, and say that the deepening summer has done you good and given you strength; say it, if possible. I shall be very anxious for the next letter. . . . My only objection to Florence is the distance from London, and the expense of the journey. One's heart is

pulled at through different English ties and can't get the right rest, and I think we shall move northwards — try France a little, after a time. The present year has been full of petty vexation to us about the difficulty of going to England, and it becomes more and more doubtful whether we can attain to the means of doing it. There are four of us and the child, you see, and precisely this year we are restricted in means, as far as our present knowledge goes; but I can't say yet, only I do very much fear. Nobody will believe our promises, I think, any more, and my poor Arabel will be in despair, and I shall lose the opportunity of *authenticating* Wiedeman; for, as Robert says, all our fine stories about him will go for nothing, and he will be set down as a sham child. If not sham, how could human vanity resist the showing him off bodily? That sounds reasonable. . . .

Certainly you are disinterested about America, and, of course, all of us who have hearts and heads must feel the sympathy of a greater nation to be more precious than a thick purse. Still, it is not just and dignified, this vantage ground of American pirates. Liking the ends and motives, one disapproves the means. Yes, even *you* do; and if I were an American I should dissent with still more emphasis. It should be made a point of honour with the nation, if there is no point of law against the re-publishers. For my own part, I have every possible reason to thank and love America; she has been very kind to me, and the visits we receive here from delightful and cordial persons of that country have been most gratifying to us. The American minister at the court of Vienna, with his family, did not pass through Florence the other day without coming to see us — General Watson Webbe — with an air of moral as well as military command in his brow and eyes. He looked, and talked too, like one of our dignities of the Old World. The go-ahead principle didn't seem the least over-strong in him, nor likely to disturb his official balance. What is to

happen next in France? Do you trust still your President? He is in a hard position, and, if he leaves the Pope where he is, in a dishonoured one. As for the change in the electoral law and the increase of income, I see nothing in either to make an outcry against. There is great injustice everywhere and a rankling party-spirit, and to speak the truth and act it appears still more difficult than usual. I was sorry, do you know, to hear of dear Mr. Horne's attempt at Shylock; he is fit for higher things. Did I tell you how we received and admired his Judas Iscariot? Yes, surely I did. He says that Louis Blanc is a friend of his and much with him, speaking with enthusiasm. I should be more sorry at his being involved with the Socialists than with Shylock — still more sorry; for I love liberty so intensely that I hate Socialism. I hold it to be the most desecrating and dishonouring to humanity of all creeds. I would rather (for *me*) live under the absolutism of Nicholas of Russia than in a Fourier machine, with my individuality sucked out of me by a social air-pump. Oh, if you happen to write again to Mrs. Deane, thank her much for her kind anxiety; but, indeed, if I had lost my darling I should not write verses about it.[1] As for the Laureateship, it won't be given to *me*, be sure, though the suggestion has gone the round of the English newspapers — 'Galignani' and all — and notwithstanding that most kind and flattering recommendation of the 'Athenæum,' for which I am sure we should be grateful to Mr. Chorley. I think Leigh Hunt should have the Laureateship. He has condescended to wish for it, and has 'worn his singing clothes' longer than most of his contemporaries, deserving the price of long as well as noble service. Whoever has it will be, of course, exempted from Court lays; and the distinction of the title and pension should remain for Spenser's sake, if

[1] Referring to the lines entitled *A Child's Grave at Florence*, which had apparently been misunderstood as implying the death of Mrs. Browning's own child.

not for Wordsworth's. We are very anxious to know about Tennyson's new work, 'In Memoriam.' Do tell us about it. You are aware that it was written years ago, and relates to a son of Mr. Hallam, who was Tennyson's intimate friend and the betrothed of his sister. I have heard, through someone who had seen the MS., that it is full of beauty and pathos. . . . Dearest, ever dear Miss Mitford, speak particularly of your health. May God bless you, prays

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

Robert's kindest regards.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 8, 1850.

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I this moment have your note; and as a packet of ours is going to England, I snatch up a pen to do what I can with it in the brief moments between this and post time. I don't wait till it shall be possible to write at length, because I have something immediate to say to you. Your letter is delightful, yet it is not for *that* that I rush so upon answering it. Nor even is it for the excellent news of your consenting, for dear Mr. Chorley's sake, to give us some more of your 'papers,'[1] though 'blessed be the hour, and month, and year' when he set about editing the 'Ladies' Companion' and persuading you to do such a thing. No, what I want to say is strictly personal to me. You are the kindest, warmest-hearted, most affectionate of critics, and precisely as such it is that you have thrown me into a paroxysm of terror. My

[1] These are the papers subsequently published under the title *Recollections of a Literary Life*. Among them was an article on the Brownings, giving biographical detail with respect to Mrs. Browning's early life, especially as to the loss of her brother, which caused extreme pain to her sensitive nature, as a later letter testifies.

dearest friend, *for the love of me* — I don't argue the point with you — but I beseech you humbly, kissing the hem of your garment, and by all sacred and tender recollections of sympathy between you and me, *don't* breathe a word about any juvenile performance of mine — *don't*, if you have any love left for me. Dear friend, 'disinter' anybody or anything you please, but don't disinter *me*, unless you mean the ghost of my vexation to vex you ever after. 'Blessed be she who spares these stones.' All the saints know that I have enough to answer for since I came to my mature mind, and that I had difficulty enough in making most of the 'Seraphim' volume presentable a little in my new edition, because it was too ostensible before the public to be caught back; but if the sins of my rawest juvenility are to be thrust upon me — and sins are extant of even twelve or thirteen, or earlier, and I was in print once when I was ten, I think — what is to become of me? I shall groan as loud as Christian did. Dearest Miss Mitford, now forgive this ingratitude which is gratitude all the time. I love you and thank you; but, right or wrong, mind what I say, and let me love and thank you still more. When you see my new edition you will see that everything worth a straw I ever wrote is there, and if there were strength in conjuration I would conjure you to pass an act of oblivion on the stubble that remains — if anything does remain, indeed. Now, more than enough of this. For the rest, I am delighted. I am even so generous as not to be jealous of Mr. Chorley for prevailing with you when nobody else could. I had given it up long ago; I never thought you would stir a pen again. By what charm did he prevail? Your series of papers will be delightful, I do not doubt; though I never could see anything in some of your heroes, American or Irish. Longfellow is a poet; I don't refer to *him*. Still, whatever you say will be worth hearing, and the *guide* through 'Pompeii' will be better than many of the ruins. 'The Pleader's Guide' I never heard of before.

Praed has written some sweet and tender things. Then I shall like to hear you on Beaumont and Fletcher, and Andrew Marvell.

I have seen nothing of Tennyson's new poem. Do you know if the echo-song is the most popular of his verses? It is only another proof to my mind of the no-worth of popularity. That song would be eminently sweet for a common writer, but Tennyson has done better, surely; his eminences are to be seen above. As for the laurel, in a sense he is worthier of it than Leigh Hunt; only Tennyson can wait, that is the single difference.

So anxious I am about your house. Your health seems to me mainly to depend on your moving, and I do urge your moving; if not there, elsewhere. May God bless you, ever dear friend.

I dare say you will think I have given too much importance to the rococo verses you had the goodness to speak of; but I have a horror of being disinterred, there's the truth! Leave the violets to grow over me. Because that wretched school-exercise of a version of the 'Prometheus' had been named by two or three people, wasn't I at the pains of making a new translation before I left England, so to erase a sort of half-visible and half-invisible 'Blot on the 'Scutcheon'? After such an expenditure of lemon-juice, you will not wonder that I should trouble you with all this talk about nothing. . . .

I am so delighted that you are to lift up your voice again, and so grateful to Mr. Chorley.

Ah yes, if we go to Paris we shall draw you. Mr. Chorley shan't have all the triumphs to himself.

Not a word more, says Robert, or the post will be missed. God bless you! Do take care of yourself, and *don't* stay in that damp house. And do make allowances for love.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

How glad I shall be if it is true that Tennyson is married! I believe in the happiness of marriage, for men especially.

Through the greater part of the summer of 1850 the Brownings held fast in Florence, and it was not until September, when Mrs. Browning was recovering from a rather sharp attack of illness, that they took a short holiday, going for a few weeks to Siena, a place which they were again to visit some years later, during the last two summers of Mrs. Browning's life. The letter announcing their arrival is the first in the present collection addressed to Miss Isa Blagden. Miss Blagden was a resident in Florence for many years, and was a prominent member of English society there. Her friendship, not only with Mrs. Browning, but with her husband, was of a very intimate character, and was continued after Mrs. Browning's death until the end of her own life in 1872.

To Miss I. Blagden

Siena: September [1850].

Here I am keeping my promise, my dear Miss Blagden. We arrived quite safely, and I was not too tired to sleep at night, though tired of course, and the baby was a miracle of goodness all the way, only inclining once to a *rabbia* through not being able to get at the electric telegraph, but in ecstasies otherwise at everything new. We had to stay at the inn all night. We heard of a multitude of villas, none of which could be caught in time for the daylight. On Sunday, however, just as we were beginning to give it up, in Robert came with good news, and we were settled in half an hour afterwards here, a small house of some seven rooms, two miles from Siena, and situated delightfully in its own grounds of vineyard and olive ground, not to boast too much of a pretty little square flower-garden. The grapes hang in

garlands (too tantalising to Wiedeman) about the walls and before them, and, through and over, we have magnificent views of a noble sweep of country, undulating hills and various verdure, and, on one side, the great Maremma extending to the foot of the Roman mountains. Our villa is on a hill called 'poggio dei venti,' and the winds give us a turn accordingly at every window. It is delightfully cool, and I have not been able to bear my window open at night since our arrival; also we get good milk and bread and eggs and wine, and are not much at a loss for anything. Think of my forgetting to tell you (Robert would not forgive me for that) how we have a *specola* or sort of belvedere at the top of the house, which he delights in, and which I shall enjoy presently, when I have recovered my taste for climbing staircases. He carried me up once, but the being carried down was so much like being carried down the flue of a chimney, that I waive the whole privilege for the future. What is better, to my mind, is the expected fact of being able to get books at Siena — *nearly* as well as at Brecker's, really; though Dumas fils seems to fill up many of the interstices where you think you have found something. *Three* pauls a month, the subscription is; and for seven, we get a 'Galignani,' or are promised to get it. We pay for our villa, ten scudi the month, so that altogether it is not ruinous. The air is as fresh as English air, without English dampness and transition; yes, and we have English lanes with bowery tops of trees, and brambles and blackberries, and not a wall anywhere, except the walls of our villa.

For my part, I am recovering strength, I hope and believe. Certainly I can move about from one room to another, without reeling much: but I still look so ghastly, as to 'back recoil,' perfectly knowing 'Why,' from everything in the shape of a looking glass. Robert has found an armchair for me at Siena. To say the truth, my time for enjoying this country life, except the enchanting silence and the look from the window, has not come yet: I must wait for a little more

strength. Wiedeman's cheeks are beginning to redden already, and he delights in the pigeons and the pig and the donkey, and a great yellow dog and everything else now; only he would change all your trees (except the apple trees), he says, for the Austrian band at any moment. He is rather a town baby. . . .

Our drawback is, dear Miss Blagden, that we have not room to take you in. So sorry we both are indeed. Write and tell me whether you have decided about Vallombrosa. I hope we shall see much of you still at Florence, if not here. We could give you everything here except a bed.

Robert's kindest regards with those of

Your ever affectionate

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

My love to Miss Agassiz, whenever you see her.

To Miss Mitford

Siena: September 24, 1850.

To think that it is more than two months since I wrote last to you, my beloved friend, makes the said two months seem even longer to me than otherwise they would necessarily be — a slow, heavy two months in every case, 'with all the weights of care and death hung at them.' Your letter reached me when I was confined to my bed, and could scarcely read it, for all the strength at my heart. . . . As soon as I could be moved, and before I could walk from one room to another, Dr. Harding insisted on the necessity of change of air (for my part, I seemed to myself more fit to change the world than the air), and Robert carried me into the railroad like a baby, and off we came here to Siena. We took a villa a mile and a half from the town, a villa situated on a windy hill (called 'poggio al vento'), with magnificent views from all the windows, and set in the midst of its own vineyard and olive ground, apple trees and peach trees, not to speak

of a little square flower-garden, for which we pay *eleven shillings one penny farthing the week;* and at the end of these three weeks, our medical comforter's prophecy, to which I listened so incredulously, is fulfilled, and I am able to walk a mile, and am really as well as ever in all essential respects. . . . Our poor little darling, too (see what disasters!), was ill four-and-twenty hours from a species of sunstroke, and frightened us with a heavy hot head and glassy staring eyes, lying in a half-stupor. Terrible, the silence that fell suddenly upon the house, without the small pattering feet and the singing voice. But God spared us; he grew quite well directly and sang louder than ever. Since we came here his cheeks have turned into roses. . . .

What still further depressed me during our latter days at Florence was the dreadful event in America — the loss of our poor friend Madame Ossoli,[1] affecting in itself, and also through association with that past, when the arrowhead of anguish was broken too deeply into my life ever to be quite drawn out. Robert wanted to keep the news from me till I was stronger, but we live too *close* for him to keep anything from me, and then I should have known it from the first letter or visitor, so there was no use trying. The poor Ossolis spent part of their last evening in Italy with us, he and she and their child, and we had a note from her off Gibraltar, speaking of the captain's death from smallpox. Afterwards it appears that her child caught the disease and lay for days between life and death; *recovered*, and then came the final agony. 'Deep called unto deep,' indeed. Now she is where there is no more grief and 'no more sea;' and none of the restless in this world, none of the shipwrecked in heart ever seemed to me to want peace more than she did. We saw much of her last winter; and over a great gulf of differing opinion we both felt drawn strongly to her. High and pure aspiration she had — yes, and a tender

[1] Drowned with her husband on their way to America.

woman's heart — and we honoured the truth and courage in her, rare in woman or man. The work she was preparing upon Italy would probably have been more equal to her faculty than anything previously produced by her pen (her other writings being curiously inferior to the impressions her conversation gave you) ; indeed, she told me it was the only production to which she had given time and labour. But, if rescued, the manuscript would be nothing but the raw material. I believe nothing was finished ; nor, if finished, could the work have been otherwise than deeply coloured by those blood colours of Socialistic views, which would have drawn the wolves on her, with a still more howling enmity, both in England and America. Therefore it was better for her to go. Only God and a few friends can be expected to distinguish between the pure personality of a woman and her professed opinions. She was chiefly known in America, I believe, by oral lectures and a connection with the newspaper press, neither of them happy means of publicity. Was she happy in anything, I wonder? She told me that she never was. May God have made her happy in her death.

Such gloom she had in leaving Italy! So full she was of sad presentiment! Do you know she gave a *Bible* as a parting gift from her child to ours, writing in it '*In memory of* Angelo Eugene Ossoli' — a strange, prophetical expression? That last evening a prophecy was talked of jestingly — an old prophecy made to poor Marquis Ossoli, 'that he should shun the sea, for that it would be fatal to him.' I remember how she turned to me smiling and said, 'Our ship is called the "Elizabeth," and I accept the omen.'

Now I am making you almost dull perhaps, and myself certainly duller. Rather let me tell you, dearest Miss Mitford, how delightedly I look forward to reading whatever you have written or shall write. You write 'as well as twenty years ago'! Why, I should think so, indeed. Don't I know what your letters are? Haven't I had faith in you

always? Haven't I, in fact, teased you half to death in proof of it? I, who was a sort of Brutus, and oughtn't to have done it, you hinted. Moreover, Robert is a great admirer of yours, as I must have told you before, and has the pretension (unjustly though, as I tell *him*) to place you still higher among writers than I do, so that we are two in expectancy here. May Mr. Chorley's periodical live a thousand years!

As my 'Seagull' won't, but you will find it in my new edition, and the 'Doves' and everything else worth a straw of my writing. Here's a fact which you must try to settle with your theories of simplicity and popularity: *None of these simple poems of mine have been favorites with general readers.* The unintelligible ones are always preferred, I observe, by extracters, compilers, and ladies and gentlemen who write to tell me that I'm a muse. The very Corn Law Leaguers in the North used to leave your 'seagulls' to fly where they could, and clap hands over mysteries of iniquity. Dearest Miss Mitford — for the rest, don't mistake what I write to you sometimes — don't fancy that I undervalue simplicity and think nothing of legitimate fame — I only mean to say that the vogue which begins with the masses generally comes to nought (Béranger is an exceptional case, from the *form* of his poems, obviously), while the appreciation beginning with the few always ends with the masses. Wasn't Wordsworth, for instance, both simple and unpopular, when he was most divine? To go to the great from the small, when I complain of the lamentable weakness of much in my 'Seraphim' volume, I don't complain of the 'Seagull' and 'Doves' and the simple verses, but exactly of the more ambitious ones. I have had to rewrite pages upon pages of that volume. Oh, such feeble rhymes, and turns of thought — such a dingy mistiness! Even Robert couldn't say a word for much of it. I took great pains with the whole, and made considerable portions new, only your favourites were not touched — not a word touched, I think, in the 'Seagull,' and scarcely

a word in the 'Doves.' You won't complain of me a great deal, I do hope and trust. Also I put back your 'little words' into the 'House of Clouds.' The two volumes are to come out, it appears, at the end of October; not before, because Mr. Chapman wished to inaugurate them for his new house in Piccadilly. There are some new poems, and one rather long ballad written at request of anti-slavery friends in America.[1] I arranged that it should come next to the 'Cry of the Children,' to appear impartial as to national grievances. . . .

Oh — Balzac — what a loss! One of the greatest and (most) original writers of the age gone from us! To hear this news made Robert and me very melancholy. Indeed, there seems to be fatality just now with the writers of France. Soulié, Bernard, gone too; George Sand translating Mazzini; Sue in a socialistical state of decadence — what he means by writing such trash as the 'Pêches' I really can't make out; only Alexandre Dumas keeping his head up gallantly, and he seems to me to write better than ever. Here is a new book, just published, by Jules Sandeau, called 'Sacs et Parchemins'! Have you seen it? It miraculously comes to us from the little Siena library.

We stay in this villa till our month is out, and then we go for a week into Siena that I may be nearer the churches and pictures, and see something of the cathedral and Sodomas. We calculated that it was cheaper to move our quarters than to have a carriage to and fro, and then Dr. Harding recommended repeated change of air for me, and he has proved his ability so much (so kindly too!) that we are bound to act on his opinions as closely as we can. Perhaps we may even go to Volterra afterwards, if the *finances* will allow of it. If we do, it may be for another week at farthest, and then we return to Florence. You had better direct there as usual. And do write and tell me

[1] *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point.*

much of yourself, and set *me* down in your thoughts as quite well, and ever yours in warm and grateful affection.

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: November 13, 1850 [postmark].

I *meant* to cross your second letter, and so, my very dear friend, you are a second time a prophetess as to my intentions, while I am still more grateful than I could have been with the literal fulfilment. Delightful it is to hear from you — do always write when you can. And though this second letter speaks of your having been unwell, still I shall continue to flatter myself that upon the whole 'the better part prevails,' and that if the rains don't wash you away this winter, I may have leave to think of you as strengthening and to strengthen still. Meanwhile you certainly, as you say, have roots to your feet. Never was anyone so pure as you from the drop of gypsey blood which tingles in my veins and my husband's, and gives us every now and then a fever for roaming, strong enough to carry us to Mount Caucasus if it were not for the healthy state of depletion observable in the purse. I get fond of places, so does he. We both of us grew rather pathetical on leaving our Sienese villa, and shrank from parting with the pig. But setting out on one's travels has a great charm; oh, I should like to be able to pay our way down the Nile, and into Greece, and into Germany, and into Spain! Every now and then we take out the road-books, calculate the expenses, and groan in the spirit when it's proved for the hundredth time that we can't do it. One must have a home, you see, to keep one's books in and one's spring-sofas in; but the charm of a home is a home *to come back to*. Do you understand? No, not you! You have as much comprehension of the pleasure of 'that sort of thing' as in the peculiar taste of the three ladies who hung themselves in a French balloon the other day, operatically *nude*,

in order, I conjecture, to the ultimate perfection of French delicacy in morals and manners. . . .

I long to see your papers, and dare say they are charming. At the same time, just because they are sure to be charming (and notwithstanding their kindness to me, notwithstanding that I live in a glass house myself, warmed by such rare stoves!) I am a little in fear that your generosity and excess of kindness may run the risk of lowering the ideal of poetry in England by lifting above the mark the names of some poetasters. Do you know, you take up your heart sometimes by mistake, to admire with, when you ought to use it only to love with? and this is apt to be dangerous, with your reputation and authority in matters of literature. See how impertinent I am! But we should all take care to teach the world that poetry is a divine thing, should we not? that is, not mere verse-making, though the verses be pretty in their way. Rather perish every verse *I* ever wrote, for one, than help to drag down an inch that standard of poetry which, for the sake of humanity as well as literature, should be kept high. As for simplicity and clearness, did I ever deny that they were excellent qualities? Never, surely. Only, they will not *make* poetry; and absolutely vain they are, and indeed all other qualities, without the essential thing, the genius, the inspiration, the insight — let us call it what we please — without which the most accomplished verse-writers had far better write prose, for their own sakes as for the world's — don't you think so? Which I say, because I sighed aloud over many names in your list, and now have taken pertly to write out the sigh at length. Too charmingly you are sure to have written — and see the danger! But Miss Fanshawe is well worth your writing of (let me say that I am sensible warmly of that) as one of the most witty of our wits in verse, men or women. I have only seen manuscript copies of some of her verses, and that years ago, but they struck me very much; and really I do not remember another female wit worthy to

sit beside her, even in French literature. Motherwell is a true poet. But oh, I don't believe in your John Clares, Thomas Davises, Whittiers, Hallocks — and still less in other names which it would be invidious to name again. How pert I am! But you give me leave to be pert, and you know the meaning of it all, after all. Your editor quarrelled a little with me once, and I with him, about the 'poetesses of the united empire,' in whom I couldn't or wouldn't find a poet, though there are extant two volumes of them, and Lady Winchelsea at the head. I hold that the writer of the ballad of 'Robin Gray' was our first poetess rightly so called, before Joanna Baillie.

Mr. Lever is in Florence, I believe, now, and was at the Baths of Lucca in the summer. We never see him; it is curious. He made his way to us with the sunniest of faces and cordialest of manners at Lucca; and I, who am much taken by manner, was quite pleased with him, and wondered how it was that I didn't like his books. Well, he only wanted to see that we had the right number of eyes and no odd fingers. Robert, in return for his visit, called on him three times, I think, and I left my card on Mrs. Lever. But he never came again — he had seen enough of us, he could put down in his private diary that we had neither claw nor tail; and there an end, properly enough. In fact, he lives a different life from ours: he in the ball-room and we in the cave, nothing could be more different; and perhaps there are not many subjects of common interest between us. I have seen extracts in the 'Examiner' from Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' which seemed to me exquisitely beautiful and pathetical. Oh, there's a poet, talking of poets. Have you read Wordsworth's last work — the legacy? With regard to the elder Miss Jewsbury, do you know, I take Mr. Chorley's part against you, because, although *I* know her only by her writings, the writings seem to me to imply a certain vigour and originality of mind, by no means ordinary. For instance, the fragments of her

letters in his 'Memorials of Mrs. Hemans' are much superior to any other letters almost in the volume — certainly to Mrs. Hemans's own. Isn't this so? And so you talk, you in England, of Prince Albert's 'folly,' do you really? Well, among the odd things we lean to in Italy is to an actual belief in the greatness and importance of the future exhibition. We have actually imagined it to be a noble idea, and you take me by surprise in speaking of the general distaste to it in England. Is it really possible? For the agriculturists, I am less surprised at coldness on their part; but do you fancy that the manufacturers and free-traders are cold too? Is Mr. Chorley against it equally? Yes, I am glad to hear of Mrs. Butler's success — or Fanny Kemble's, ought I to say? Our little Wiedeman, who can't speak a word yet, waxes hotter in his ecclesiastical and musical passion. Think of that baby (just cutting his eyeteeth) screaming in the streets till he is taken into the churches, kneeling on his knees to the first sound of music, and folding his hands and turning up his eyes in a sort of ecstatical state. One scarcely knows how to deal with the sort of thing: it is too soon for religious controversy. He crosses himself, I assure you. Robert says it is as well to have the eyeteeth and the Puseyistical crisis over together. The child is a very curious imaginative child, but too excitable for his age, that's all I complain of. . . . God bless you, my much loved friend. Write to

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

What books by Soulié have appeared since his death? Do you remember? I have just got 'Les Enfants de l'Amour,' by Sue. I suppose he will prove in it the illegitimacy of legitimacy, and *vice versâ*. Sue is in decided decadence, for the rest, since he has taken to illustrating Socialism!

To Miss I. Blagden

[Florence:] Sunday morning [about 1850].

My dear Miss Blagden, — In spite of all your *drawing* kindness, we find it impossible to go to you on Monday. We are expecting friends from Rome who will remain only a few days, perhaps, in Florence. Now it seems to me that you very often pass our door. Do you not too often leave the trace of your goodness with me? And would it not be better of you still, if you would at once make use of us and give us pleasure by pausing here, you and Miss Agassiz, to rest and refresh yourselves with tea, coffee, or whatever else you may choose? We shall be delighted to see you always, and don't fancy that I say so out of form or 'tinkling cymbalism.'

Thank you for your intention about the 'Leader.' Robert and I shall like much to see anything of John Mill's on the subject of Socialism or any other. By the 'British Review,' do you mean the *North British?* I read a clever article in that review some months ago on the German Socialists, ably embracing in its analysis the fraternity in France, and attributed, I have since heard, to Dr. Hanna, the son-in-law and biographer of Chalmers. Christian Socialists are by no means a new sect, the Moravians representing the theory with as little offence and absurdity as may be. What is it, after all, but an out-of-door extension of the monastic system? The religious principle, more or less apprehended, may bind men together so, absorbing their individualities, and presenting an aim *beyond the world;* but upon merely human and earthly principles no such system can stand, I feel persuaded, and I thank God for it. If Fourierism could be realised (which it surely cannot) out of a dream, the destinies of our race would shrivel up under the unnatural heat, and human nature would, in my mind, be desecrated and dishonored — because I do not believe in purification without suffering,

in progress without struggle, in virtue without temptation. Least of all do I consider happiness the end of man's life. We look to higher things, have nobler ambitions.

Also, in every advancement of the world hitherto, the individual has led the masses. Thus, to elicit individuality has been the object of the best political institutions and governments. Now, in these new theories, the individual is ground down into the multitude, and society must be 'moving all together if it moves at all' — restricting the very possibility of progress by the use of the lights of genius. Genius is *always individual.*

Here's a scribble upon grave matters! I ought to be acknowledging instead your scrupulous honesty, as illustrated by five-franc pieces and Tuscan florins. Make us as useful as you can do, for the future; and please us by coming often. I am afraid your German Baroness could not make an arrangement with you, as you do not mention her. Give our best regards to Miss Agassiz, and accept them yourself, dear Miss Blagden, from

Your affectionate

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

To Mr. Westwood

Florence: Thursday, December 12, 1850.

My dear Mr. Westwood, — Your book has not reached us yet, and so if I waited for that, to write, I might wait longer still. But I don't wait for that, because you bade me not to do so, and besides we have only this moment finished reading 'In Memoriam,' and it was a sort of miracle with us that we got it so soon. . . .

December 13. — The above sentences were written yesterday, and hardly had they been written when your third letter came with its enclosure. How very kind you are to me, and how am I to thank you enough! If you had not sent me the 'Athenæum' article I never should have seen

it probably, for my husband only saw it in the reading room, where women don't penetrate (because in Italy we can't read, you see), and where the periodicals are kept so strictly, like Hesperian apples, by the dragons of the place, that none can be stolen away even for half an hour. So he could only wish me to catch sight of that article — and you are good enough to send it and oblige us both exceedingly. For which kindness thank you, thank you! The favor shown to me in it is extreme, and I am as grateful as I ought to be. Shall I ask the 'Note and Query' magazine why the 'Athenæum' does show me so much favour, while, as in a late instance, so little justice is shown to my husband? It's a problem, like another. As for poetry, I hope to do better things in it yet, though I *have* a child to 'stand in my sunshine,' as you suppose he must; but he only makes the sunbeams brighter with his glistening curls, little darling — and who can complain of that? You can't think what a good, sweet, curious, imagining child he is. Half the day I do nothing but admire him — there's the truth. He doesn't talk yet much, but he gesticulates with extraordinary force of symbol, and makes surprising revelations to us every half-hour or so. Meanwhile Flush loses nothing I assure you. On the contrary, he is hugged and kissed (rather too hard sometimes), and never is permitted to be found fault with by anybody under the new *régime*. If Flush is scolded, Baby cries as matter of course, and he would do admirably for a 'whipping-boy' if that excellent institution were to be revived by Young England and the Tractarians for the benefit of our deteriorated generations. I was ill towards the end of last summer, and we had to go to Siena for the sake of getting strength again, and there we lived in a villa among a sea of little hills, and wrapt up in vineyards and olive yards, enjoying everything. Much the worst of Italy is, the drawback about books. Somebody said the other day that we 'sate here like posterity' — reading books with the gloss off them. But our case in reality is

far more dreary, seeing that Prince Posterity will have glossy books of his own. How exquisite 'In Memoriam' is, how earnest and true; after all, the gloss never can wear off books like that.

And as to your book, it will come, it will come, and meantime I may assure you that posterity is very impatient for it. The Italian poem will be read with the interest which is natural. You know it's a more than doubtful point whether Shakespeare ever saw Italy out of a vision, yet he and a crowd of inferior writers have written about Venice and vineyards as if born to the manner of them. We hear of Carlyle travelling in France and Germany — but I must leave room for the words you ask for from a certain hand below.

Ever dear Mr. Westwood's obliged and faithful

E. B. B.

And the 'certain hand' will write its best (and far better than any poor 'Pippa Passes') in recording a feeling which does not pass at all, that of gratitude for all such generous sympathy as dear Mr. Westwood's for E. B. B. and (in his proper degree) R. BROWNING.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 13, 1850.

Did I write a scolding letter, dearest Miss Mitford? So much the better, when people deserve to be scolded. The worst is, however, that it sometimes does them no sort of good, and that they will sit on among the ruins of Carthage, let ever so many messages come from Italy. My only hope now is, that you will have a mild winter in England, as we seem likely to have it here; and that in the spring, by the help of some divine interposition of friends supernaturally endowed (after the manner of Mr. Chorley), you may be made to go away into a house with fast walls and

chimneys. Certainly, if you could be made to *write*, anything else is possible. That's my comfort. And the other's my hope, as I said; and so between hope and consolation I needn't scold any more. Let me tell you what I have heard of Mrs. Gaskell, for fear I should forget it later. She is connected by marriage with Mrs. A. T. Thompson, and from a friend of Mrs. Thompson's it came to me, and really seems to exonerate Chapman & Hall from the charge advanced against them. 'Mary Barton' was shown in manuscript to Mrs. Thompson, and failed to please her; and, in deference to her judgment, certain alterations were made. Subsequently it was offered to all or nearly all the publishers in London and rejected. Chapman & Hall accepted and gave a hundred pounds, as you heard, for the copyright of the work; and though the success did not, perhaps (that is quite possible), induce any liberality with regard to copies, they gave *another hundred pounds* upon printing the second edition, and it was not in the bond to do so. I am told that the liberality of the proceeding was appreciated by the author and her friends accordingly — and there's the end of my story. Two hundred pounds is a good price — isn't it? — for a novel, as times go. Miss Lynn had only a hundred and fifty for her Egyptian novel, or perhaps for the Greek one. Taking the long run of poetry (if it runs at all), I am half given to think that it pays better than the novel does, in spite of everything. Not that we speak out of golden experience; alas, no! we have had not a sou from our books for a year past, the booksellers being bound of course to cover their own expenses first. Then this Christmas account has not yet reached us. But the former editions paid us regularly so much a year, and so will the present ones, I hope. Only I was not thinking of *them*, in preferring what may strike you as an extravagant paradox, but of Tennyson's returns from Moxon last year, which I understand amounted to five hundred pounds. To be sure, 'In Memoriam' was a new success, which should not

prevent our considering the fact of a regular income proceeding from the previous books. A novel flashes up for a season and does not often outlast it. For 'Mary Barton' I am a little, little disappointed, do you know. I have just done reading it. There is power and truth — she can shake and she can pierce — but I wish half the book away, it is so tedious every now and then; and besides I want more beauty, more air from the universal world — these class-books must always be defective as works of art. How could I help being disappointed a little when Mrs. Jameson told me that 'since the "Bride of Lammermoor," nothing had appeared equal to "Mary Barton"?' Then the style of the book is slovenly, and given to a kind of phraseology which would be vulgar even as colloquial English. Oh, it is a powerful book in many ways. You are not to set me down as hypercritical. Probably the author will write herself clear of many of her faults: she has strength enough. As to 'In Memoriam,' I have seen it, I have read it — dear Mr. Kenyon had the goodness to send it to me by an American traveller — and now I really do disagree with you, for the book has gone to my heart and soul; I think it full of deep pathos and beauty. All I wish away is the marriage hymn at the end, and *that* for every reason I wish away — it's a discord in the music. The monotony is a part of the position — the sea is monotonous, and so is lasting grief. Your complaint is against fate and humanity rather than against the poet Tennyson. Who that has suffered has not felt wave after wave break dully against one rock, till brain and heart, with all their radiances, seemed lost in a single shadow? So the effect of the book is artistic, I think, and indeed I do not wonder at the opinion which has reached us from various quarters that Tennyson stands higher through having written it. You see, what he appeared to want, according to the view of many, was an earnest personality and direct purpose. In this last book, though of course there is not room in it for that exercise of creative

faculty which elsewhere established his fame, he appeals heart to heart, directly as from his own to the universal heart, and we all feel him nearer to us — *I* do — and so do others. Have you read a poem called 'the Roman' which was praised highly in the 'Athenæum,' but did not seem to Robert to justify the praise in the passages extracted? written by somebody with certainly a *nom de guerre* — Sidney Yendys. Observe, *Yendys* is *Sidney* reversed. Have you heard anything about it, or seen? The 'Athenæum' has been gracious to me beyond gratitude almost; nothing could by possibility be kinder. A friend of mine sent me the article from Brussels — a Mr. Westwood, who writes poems himself; yes, and poetical poems too, written with an odorous, fresh sense of poetry about them. He has not original power, more's the pity: but he has stayed near the rose in the 'sweet breath and buddings of the spring,' and although that won't make anyone live beyond spring-weather, it is the expression of a sensitive and aspirant nature; and the man is interesting and amiable — an old correspondent of mine, and kind to me always. From the little I know of Mr. Bennett, I should say that Mr. Westwood stood much higher in the matter of gifts, though I fear that neither of them will make way in that particular department of literature selected by them for action. Oh, my dearest friend, you may talk about coteries, but the English society at Florence (from what I hear of the hum of it at a distance) is worse than any coterie-society in the world. A coterie, if I understand the thing, is informed by a unity of sentiment, or faith, or prejudice; but this society here is not informed at all. People come together to gamble or dance, and if there's an end, why so much the better; but there's *not* an end in most cases, by any manner of means, and against every sort of innocence. Mind, I imply nothing about Mr. Lever, who lives irreproachably with his wife and family, rides out with his children in a troop of horses to the Cascine, and yet is as social a person as his joyous temperament leads

him to be. But we live in a cave, and peradventure he is afraid of the damp of us — who knows? We know very few residents in Florence, and these, with chance visitors, chiefly Americans, are all that keep us from solitude; every now and then in the evening somebody drops in to tea. Would, indeed you were near! but should I be satisfied with you 'once a week,' do you fancy. Ah, you would soon love Robert. You couldn't help it, I am sure. *I* should be soon turned down to an underplace, and, under the circumstances, would not struggle. Do you remember once telling me that 'all men are tyrants'? — as sweeping an opinion as the Apostle's, that 'all men are liars.' Well, if you knew Robert you would make an exception certainly. Talking of the artistical English here, somebody told me the other day of a young Cambridge or Oxford man who deducted from his researches in Rome and Florence that 'Michael Angelo was a wag.' Another, after walking through the Florentine galleries, exclaimed to a friend of mine, 'I have seen nothing here equal to those magnificent pictures in Paris by Paul de Kock.' My friend humbly suggested that he might mean Paul de la Roche. But see what English you send us for the most part. We have had one very interesting visitor lately, the grandson of Goethe. He did us the honour, he said, of spending two days in Florence on our account, he especially wishing to see Robert on account of some sympathy of view about 'Paracelsus.' There can scarcely be a more interesting young man — quite young he seems, and full of aspiration of the purest kind towards the good and true and beautiful, and not towards the poor laurel crowns attainable from any possible public. I don't know when I have been so charmed by a visitor, and indeed Robert and I paid him the highest compliment we could, by wishing, one to another, that our little Wiedeman might be like him some day. I quite agree with you about the church of your Henry. It surprises me that a child of seven years should

find pleasure even once a day in the long English service—too long, according to my doxy, for matured years. As to fanaticism, it depends on a defect of intellect rather than on an excess of the adoring faculty. The latter cannot, I think, be too fully developed. How I shall like you to see our Wiedeman! He is a radiant little creature, really, yet he won't talk; he does nothing but gesticulate, only making his will and pleasure wonderfully clear and supreme, I assure you. *He's* a tyrant, ready made for your theory. If your book is 'better than I expect,' what will it be? God bless you! Be well, and love me, and write to me, for I am your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: January 30, 1851.

Here I am at last, dearest friend. But you forget how you told me, when you wrote your 'long letter,' that you were going away into chaos somewhere, and that your address couldn't be known yet. It was this which made me delay the answer to that welcome letter—and to begin to 'put off' is fatal, as perhaps you know. Now forgive me, and I will behave better in future, indeed. . . .

I am quite well, and looking well, they say; but the frightful illness of the autumn left me paler and thinner long after the perfect recovery. The physician told Robert afterwards that few women would have recovered at all; and when I left Siena I was as able to walk, and as well in every respect as ever, notwithstanding everything—think, for instance, of my walking to St. Miniato, here in Florence! You remember, perhaps, what that pull is. I dare say you heard from Henrietta how we enjoyed our rustication at Siena. It is pleasant even to look back on it. We were obliged to look narrowly at the economies, more narrowly than usual; but the cheapness of the place suited the occasion, and the little villa, like a mere tent

among the vines, charmed us, though the doors didn't shut, and though (on account of the smallness) Robert and I had to whisper all our talk whenever Wiedeman was asleep. Oh, I wish you were in Italy. I wish you had come here this winter which has been so mild, and which, with ordinary prudence, would certainly have suited dear Mr. Martin. . . . I tried to dissuade the Peytons from making the experiment, through the fear of its not answering. . . . We can't get them into society, you see, because we are out of it, having struggled to keep out of it with hands and feet, and partially having succeeded, knowing scarcely anybody except bringers of letters of introduction, and those chiefly Americans and not residents in Florence. The other day, however, Mrs. Trollope and her daughter-in-law called on us, and it is settled that we are to know them; though Robert had made a sort of vow never to sit in the same room with the author of certain books directed against liberal institutions and Victor Hugo's poetry. I had a longer battle to fight, on the matter of this vow, than any since my marriage, and had some scruples at last of taking advantage of the pure goodness which induced him to yield to my wishes; but I *did*, because I hate to seem ungracious and unkind to people; and human beings, besides, are better than their books, than their principles, and even than their everyday actions, sometimes. I am always crying out: 'Blessed be the inconsistency of men.' Then I thought it probable that, the first shock of the cold water being over, he would like the proposed new acquaintances very much — and so it turns out. She was very agreeable, and kind, and good-natured, and talked much about *you*, which was a charm of itself; and we mean to be quite friends, and to lend each other books, and to forget one another's offences, in print or otherwise. Also, she admits us on her private days; for she has public days (dreadful to relate!), and is in the full flood and flow of Florentine society. Do write to me, will you? or else I shall set you down as vexed with

me. The state of politics here is dismal. Newspapers put down; Protestant places of worship shut up. It is so bad that it must soon be better. What are you both thinking of the 'Papal aggression'?[1] Are you frightened? Are you frenzied? For my part I can't get up much steam about it. The 'Great Insult' was simply a great mistake, the consequence (natural enough) of the Tractarian idiocies as enacted in Italy.

God bless both of you, dearest and always remembered friends! Robert's best regards, he says.

Your affectionate

Ba.

Tell me your thoughts about France. I am so anxious about the crisis there.[2] We have had a very interesting visit lately from the grandson of Goethe.

To Miss Browning

Florence: April 23, 1851 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — I do hope that Robert takes his share of the blame in using and abusing you as we have done. It was altogether too bad — shameful — to send that last MS. for you to copy out; and I did, indeed, make a little outcry about it, only he insisted on having it so. Was it very wrong, I wonder? Your kindness and affectionateness I never doubt of; but if you are not quite strong just now, you might be teased, in spite of your heart, by all that copying work — not pleasant at any time. Well, believe that I thank you, at least gratefully, for what you have done. So quickly too! The advertisement at the end of the week proves how you must have worked for me. Thank you, dear Sarianna.

[1] The Papal Bull appointing Roman Catholic bishops throughout England was issued on September 24, 1850, and England was now in the throes of the anti-papal excitement produced by it.

[2] Where Louis Napoleon was engaged in his series of encroachments on the power of the Assembly and intrigues for the imperial throne.

Robert will have told you our schemes, and how we are going to work, and are to love you *near* for the future, I hope. You, who are wise, will approve of us, I think, for keeping on our Florentine apartment, so as to run no more risk than is necessary in making the Paris experiment. We shall let the old dear rooms, and make money by them, and keep them to fall back upon, in case we fail at Paris. 'But we'll not fail.' Well, I hope not, though I am very brittle still and susceptible to climate. Dearest Sarianna, it will do you infinite good to come over to us every now and then — you want change, absolute change of scene and air and climate, I am confident; and you never will be right till you have had it. We talk, Robert and I, of carrying you back with us to Rome next year as an English trophy. Meanwhile you will see Wiedeman, you and dear Mr. Browning. Don't expect to see a baby of Anak, that's all. Robert is always measuring him on the door, and reporting such wonderful growth (some inch a week, I think), that if you receive his reports you will cry out on beholding the child. At least, you'll say: 'How little he must have been to be no larger now.' You'll fancy he must have begun from a mustard-seed! The fact is, he is small, only full of life and joy to the brim. I am not afraid of your not loving him, nor of his not loving you. He has a loving little heart, I assure you. If anyone pricks a finger with a needle he begins to cry — he can't bear to see the least living thing hurt. And when he loves, it is well. Robert says I must finish, so here ends dearest Sarianna's

Ever affectionate sister

BA.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

VOL. II.

THE LETTERS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

CHAPTER VII

1851–1852

SINCE they first settled in Florence the Brownings had made no long or distant expeditions from their new home. Their summer excursions to Vallombrosa, Lucca, or Siena had been of the nature of short holidays, and had not taken them beyond the limits of Tuscany. Now they had planned a far wider series of travels, which, beginning with Rome, Naples, Venice, and Milan, should then be extended across the Alps, and comprehend Brussels, Paris, and ultimately London. This ambitious programme had to be curtailed by the omission of the southern tour to Rome and Naples, as well as the digression to Brussels, but the rest of the scheme was carried out, and about the beginning of June they left Casa Guidi for an absence which extended over seventeen months.

The holiday had been well earned, especially by Mrs. Browning, who, since the preparation of the new edition of her poems in the previous year, had been writing the second part of 'Casa Guidi Windows.' It is probably to this poem that she refers in the letter to Miss Browning printed

at the end of the last chapter, Miss Browning having on more than one occasion helped both her brother and her sister-in-law in the task of passing their poems through the press. The book appeared in June, just as they were starting on their travels, and probably for this reason we hear less in the letters of its reception. It was hardly to be expected that the English public would take a very keen interest in a poem dealing almost entirely with Italian politics, and half of it with the politics of three years ago. Either in 1849 or in 1859 the interest would have been livelier; but Italy was passing now through the valley of the shadow, and, save for the horrors of the Neapolitan prisons, was not much before the public for the moment. The intrigues of Louis Napoleon and the ostentatious aggression of the Pope in England were the matters of most interest in foreign politics, and both were overshadowed by the absorbing topic of the Great Exhibition.

Another reason why 'Casa Guidi Windows' has received less appreciation than it deserves, both at the time of its publication and since, is that it stands rather apart from all the recognised species of poetry, and is hard to classify and criticise. Its political and contemporary character cut it off from the imaginative and historical subjects which form in general the matter of poetry, while its genuinely poetic emotion and language separate it from the political pamphlet or the occasional verse. It is a poetic treatment of a political subject raised to a high level by the genuine enthusiasm and fire with which it is inspired, and these give it a value which lasts far beyond the moment of the events which gave it birth. The execution, too, shows an advance on most of Mrs. Browning's previous work. The dangerous experiments in rhyming which characterised many of the poems in the volumes of 1844 are abandoned; the licences of language are less frequent; the verse runs smoothly and is more uniformly under command. It would appear as if the heat of inspiration which produced the

'Sonnets from the Portuguese' had left a permanent and purifying effect upon her style. The poem has been neglected by those who take little interest in Italy and its history, and adversely criticised by those who do not sympathise with its political and religious opinions; but with those who look only to its poetry and to its warm-hearted championship of a great cause, it will always hold a high place of its own among Mrs. Browning's writings.

To Miss I. Blagden

Florence: May 1, [1851].

I am writing to you, dearest Miss Blagden, at last, you see; though you must have excommunicated me before now as the most ungrateful of correspondents and friends. Do forgive what you can — and your kindness is so great that I believe you can, and shall go on to write as if you did. We have been in the extremity of confusion and indecision. Remember how the fairy princes used to do when they arrived at the meeting of three roads, and had to consider what choice to make. How they used to shake their heads and ponder, and end sometimes by drawing lots! Much in the like perplexity have we been. Everything was ready for Rome — the day fixed, the packing begun, the vettura bargained for. Suddenly, visions of obstacles rose up. We were late in the season. We should be late for the festas. May would be hot in Rome for Wiedeman. Then two journeys, north and south, to Rome and Naples, besides Paris and England, pulled fearfully at the purse-strings. Plainly we couldn't afford it. So everything was stopped and changed. We gave up Rome and you, and are now actually on the point of setting out for Venice; Venice is to console us for Rome. We go to-morrow, indeed. The plan is to stay a fortnight at Venice (or more or less, as the charm works), and then to strike across to Milan; across the

Splügen into Switzerland, and to linger there among the hills and lakes for a part of the summer, so working out an intention of economy; then down the Rhine; then by railroad to Brussels; so to Paris, settling there; after which we pay our visit to England for a few weeks. Early next spring we mean to go to Rome and return here, either *for good* (which is very possible) or for the purpose of arranging our house affairs and packing up books and furniture. As it is, we have our apartment for another year, and shall let it if we can. It has been painted, cleaned, and improved in all ways, till my head and Robert's ring again with the confusion of it all. Oh that we were gone, since we are to go! When out of sight of Florence, we shall begin to enjoy, I hope, the sight of other things, but as it is the impression is only painful and dizzying. Our friends Mr. and Mrs. Ogilvy go with us as far as Venice, and then leave us on a direct course for England, having committed their children and nurses to the care of her sister at the Baths of Lucca meantime. We take with us only Wilson.

Do write to me at Venice, Poste Restante, that I may know you are thinking of me and excusing me kindly. If you knew how uncertain and tormented we have been. I won't even ask Robert to add a line to this, he is so overwhelmed with a flood of businesses; but he bids me speak to you of him as affectionately and faithfully (because affectionately) as I have reason to do. So kind it was in you to think of taking the trouble of finding us an apartment! So really sensible we are to all your warm-hearted goodness, with fullness of heart on our side too. And, after all, we are not parting! Either we shall find you in Italy again, or you will find us in Paris. I have a presentimental assurance of finding one another again before long. Remember us and love us meantime.

As to your spiritual visitor — why, it would be hard to make out a system of Romish doctrine from the most

Romish version of the S.S.[1] The differences between the Protestant version and the Papistical are not certainly justifiable by the Greek original, on the side of the latter. In fact, the Papistical version does not pretend to follow the Greek text, but a Latin translation of the same — it's a translation from a translation. Granting it, however, to be faithful, I must repeat that to make out the Romish system from even *such* a Romish version could not be achieved. So little does Scripture (however represented) seem to me to justify that system of ecclesiastical doctrine and discipline. I answer your question because you bid me, but I am not a bit frightened at the idea of your becoming a R.C., however you may try to frighten me. You have too much intelligence and uprightness of intellect. We do hope you have enjoyed Rome, and that dearest Miss Agassiz (give our kind love to her) is better and looks better than we all thought her a little while ago. I have a book coming out in England called 'Casa Guidi Windows,' which will prevent everybody else (except you) from speaking to me again. Do love me always, as I shall you. Forgive me, and *don't* forget me. I shall try, after a space of calm, to behave better to you, and more after my *heart* — for I am ever (as Robert is)

Your faithfully affectionate friend,

Elizabeth B. Browning.

To Miss Mitford

Venice: June 4, [1851].

My ever dearest Miss Mitford, — I must write to you from Venice, though it can only be a few lines. So much I have to say and *feel* in writing to you, and thinking that you were not well when you wrote last to me, I long to hear from you — and yet I can't tell you to-day where a

[1] The Holy Scriptures.

letter will find me. We are wanderers on the face of the world just now, and with every desire of going straight from Venice to Milan to-morrow (Friday) week, we shall more probably, at the Baths of Recoaro, be lingering and lingering. Therefore will you write to the care of Miss Browning, New Cross, Hatcham, near London? for so I shall not lose your letter. I have been between heaven and earth since our arrival at Venice. The heaven of it is ineffable. Never had I touched the skirts of so celestial a place. The beauty of the architecture, the silver trails of water up between all that gorgeous colour and carving, the enchanting silence, the moonlight, the music, the gondolas — I mix it all up together, and maintain that nothing is like it, nothing equal to it, not a second Venice in the world. Do you know, when I came first I felt as if I never could go away. But now comes the earth side. Robert, after sharing the ecstasy, grows uncomfortable, and nervous, and unable to eat or sleep; and poor Wilson, still worse, in a miserable condition of continual sickness and headache. Alas for these mortal Venices — so exquisite and so bilious! Therefore I am constrained away from my joys by sympathy, and am forced to be glad that we are going off on Friday. For myself, it does not affect me at all. I like these moist, soft, relaxing climates; even the scirocco doesn't touch me much. And the baby grows gloriously fatter in spite of everything.

No, indeed and indeed, we are not going to England for the sake of the Exposition. How could you fancy such a thing, even once? In any case we shall not reach London till late, and if by any arrangement I could see my sister Arabel in France or on the coast of England, we would persuade Robert's family to meet us there, and not see London at all. Ah, if you knew how abhorrent the thought of England is to *me!* Well, we must not talk of it. My eyes shut suddenly when my thoughts go that way.

Tell me exactly how you are. I heartily rejoice that you

have decided at last about the other house, so as to avoid the danger of another autumn and winter in the damp. Do you write still for Mr. Chorley's periodical, and how does it go on? Here in Italy the fame of it does not penetrate. As for Venice, you can't get even a 'Times,' much less an 'Athenæum.' We comfort ourselves by taking a box at the opera (the whole box on the ground tier, mind) for two shillings and eightpence English. Also, every evening at half-past eight, Robert and I are sitting under the moon in the great piazza of St. Mark, taking excellent coffee and reading the French papers. Can you fancy me so?

You will receive a copy of my new poem, 'Casa Guidi Windows,' soon after this note. I have asked Sarianna Browning to see that you receive it safely. I don't give away copies (having none to give away, according to booksellers' terms), but I can't let you receive my little book from another hand than the writer's. Tell me how you like the poem — honestly, truly — which numbers of people will be sure to dislike profoundly and angrily, perhaps. We think of going to Recoaro because Mr. Chorley praised it to us years ago. Tell him so if you write.

Here are a heap of words tossed down upon paper. I can't put the stops even. Do write *about yourself*, not waiting for the book.

Your ever attached

E. B. B.

At Paris how near we shall be! How sure to meet. Have you been to the Exposition yourself? Tell me. And what is the general feeling *now?*

To John Kenyon

Paris: July 7, [1851].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — I have waited day after day during this week that we have been here, to be able to tell you that we have decided this or that — but the indecision

lasts, and I can't let you hear from others of our being in Paris when you have a right more than anybody almost to hear all about us. I wanted to write to you, indeed, from Venice, where we stayed a month, and much the same reason made me leave it undone, as we were making and unmaking plans the whole time, and we didn't know till the last few hours, for instance, whether or not we should go to Milan. Venice is quite exquisite; it wrapt me round with a spell at first sight, and I longed to live and die there — never to go away. The gondolas, and the glory they swim through, and the silence of the population, drifted over one's head across the bridges, and the fantastic architecture and the coffee-drinking and music in the Piazza San Marco, everything fitted into my lazy, idle nature and weakness of body, as if I had been born to the manner of it and to no other. Do you know I expected in Venice a dreary sort of desolation? Whereas there was nothing melancholy at all, only a soothing, lulling, rocking atmosphere which if Armida had lived in a city rather than in a garden would have suited her purpose. Indeed Taglioni seems to be resting her feet from dancing, there, with a peculiar zest, inasmuch as she has bought three or four of the most beautiful palaces. How could she do better? And one or two ex-kings and queens (of the more vulgar royalties) have wrapt themselves round with those shining waters to forget the purple — or dream of it, as the case may be. Robert and I led a true Venetian life, I assure you; we 'swam in gondolas' to the Lido and everywhere else, we went to a festa at Chioggia in the steamer (frightening Wilson by being kept out by the wind till two o'clock in the morning), we went to the opera and the play (at a shilling each, or not as much!), and we took coffee every evening on St. Mark's Piazza to music and the stars. Altogether it would have been perfect, only what's perfect in the world? While I grew fat, Wilson grew thin, and Robert could not sleep at nights. The air was too relaxing or soft or something for them both, and

poor Wilson declares that another month of Venice would have killed her outright. Certainly she looked dreadfully ill and could eat nothing. So I was forced to be glad to go away, out of pure humanity and sympathy, though I keep saying softly to myself ever since, 'What is there on earth like Venice?'

Then, we slept at Padua on St. Anthony's night (more's the pity for us: they made us pay sixteen zwanzigers for it!), and Robert and I, leaving Wiedeman at the inn, took a calèche and drove over to Arqua, which I had set my heart on seeing for Petrarch's sake. Did you ever see it, *you?* And didn't it move you, the sight of that little room where the great soul exhaled itself? Even Robert's man's eyes had tears in them as we stood there, and looked through the window at the green-peaked hills. And, do you know, I believe in 'the cat.'

Through Brescia we passed by moonlight (such a flood of white moonlight) and got into Milan in the morning. There we stayed two days, and I climbed to the topmost pinnacle of the cathedral; wonder at me! Indeed I was rather overtired, it must be confessed — three hundred and fifty steps — but the sight was worth everything, enough to light up one's memory for ever. How glorious that cathedral is! worthy almost of standing face to face with the snow Alps; and itself a sort of snow dream by an artist architect, taken asleep in a glacier! Then the Da Vinci Christ did not disappoint us, which is saying much. It is divine. And the Lombard school generally was delightful after Bologna and those soulless Caracci! I have even given up Guido, and Guercino too, since knowing more of them. Correggio, on the other hand, is sublime at Parma; he is wonderful! besides having the sense to make his little Christs and angels after the very likeness of my baby.

From Milan we moved to Como, steamed down to Menaggio (opposite to Bellaggio), took a calèche to Porlezza,

and a boat to Lugano, another calèche to Bellinzona, left Wiedeman there, and, returning on our steps, steamed down and up again the Lago Maggiore, went from Bellinzona to Faido and slept, and crossed the Mount St. Gothard the next day, catching the Lucerne steamer at Fluellen. The scenery everywhere was most exquisite, but of the great *pass* I shall say nothing — it was like standing in the presence of God when He is terrible. The tears overflowed my eyes. I think I never *saw* the sublime before. Do you know I sate out in the coupé a part of the way with Robert so as to apprehend the whole sight better, with a thick shawl over my head, only letting out the eyes to see. They told us there was more snow than is customary at this time of year, and it well might be so, for the passage through it, cut for the carriage, left the snow-walls nodding over us at a great height on each side, and the cold was intense.

Do you know we might yield the palm, and that Lucerne is far finer than any of our Italian lakes? Even Robert had to confess it at once. I wanted to stay in Switzerland, but we found it wiser to hasten our steps and come to Paris; so we came. Yes, and we travelled from Strasburg to Paris in four-and-twenty hours, night and day, never stopping except for a quarter of an hour's breakfast and half an hour's dinner. So afraid I was of the fatigue for Wiedeman! But between the unfinished railroad and the diligence, there's a complication of risks of losing places just now, and we were forced to go the whole way in a breath or to hazard being three or four days on the road. So we took the coupé and resigned ourselves, and poor little babe slept at night and laughed in the day, and came into Paris as fresh in spirit as if just alighted from the morning star, screaming out with delight at the shops! Think of that child! Upon the whole he has enjoyed our journey as much as any one of us, observing and admiring; though Robert and Wilson will have it that some of his admiration of the *scenery* we passed through was pure

affectation and acted out to copy ours. He cried out, clasping his hands, that the mountains were 'due' — meaning a great number. His love of beautiful buildings, of churches especially, no one can doubt about. When first he saw St. Mark's, he threw up his arms in wonder, and then, clasping them round Wilson's neck (she was carrying him), he kissed her in an ecstasy of joy. And that was after a long day's journey, when most other children would have been tired and fretful. But the sense of the beautiful is certainly very strong in him, little darling. He can't say the word 'church' yet, but when he sees one he begins to chant. Oh, he's a true Florentine in some things.

Well, now we are in Paris and have to forget the 'belle chiese;' we have beautiful shops instead, false teeth grinning at the corners of the streets, and disreputable prints, and fascinating hats and caps, and brilliant restaurants, and M. le Président in a cocked hat and with a train of cavalry, passing like a rocket along the boulevards to an occasional yell from the Red. Oh yes, and don't mistake me! for I like it all extremely, it's a splendid city — a city in the country, as Venice is a city in the sea. And I'm as much amused as Wiedeman, who stands in the street before the printshops (to Wilson's great discomfort) and roars at the lions. And I admire the bright green trees and gardens everywhere in the heart of the town. Surely it is a most beautiful city! And I like the restaurants more than is reasonable; dining *à la carte*, and mixing up one's dinner with heaps of newspapers, and the 'solution' by Emile de Girardin, who suggests that the next President should be a tailor. Moreover we find apartments very cheap in comparison to what we feared, and we are in a comfortable quiet hotel, where it is possible, and not ruinous, to wait and look about one.

As to England — oh England — how I dread to think of it. We talk of going over for a short time, but have not decided when; yet it will be soon perhaps — it may. If

it were not for my precious Arabel, I would not go ; because Robert's family would come to him here, they say. But to give up Arabel is impossible. Henrietta is in Somersetshire ; it is uncertain whether I shall see her, even in going, and she too might come to Paris this winter. And you will come — you promised, I think? . . .

I feel here *near enough* to England, that's the truth. I recoil from the bitterness of being nearer. Still, it must be thought of.

Dearest cousin, dearest friend, in all this pleasant journey we have borne you in mind, and gratefully ! You must feel *that* without being told. I won't quite do like my Wiedeman, who every time he fires his gun (if it's twenty times in five minutes) says 'Papa, papa,' because Robert gave him the gun, and the gratitude is as re-iterantly and loudly explosive. But one's thoughts may say what they please and as often as they please.

Arabel tells me you are kind to the manner of my poem, though to the matter obdurate. Miss Mitford, too, says that it won't receive the sympathy proper to a home subject, because the English people don't care anything for the Italians now ; despising them for their want of originality in *Art!* That's very good of the English people, really ! I fear much that dear Miss Mitford has suffered seriously from the effects of the damp house last winter. What she says of herself makes me anxious about her.

Give my true love to dear Miss Bayley, and say how I repent in ashes for not having written to her. But she is large-hearted and will forgive me, and I shall make amends and send her sheet upon sheet. Barry Cornwall's letter to Robert, of course, delighted as well as honoured me. Does it appear in the new edition of his 'songs' &c.?

Mind, if ever I go to England I shall have no heart to go out of a very dark corner. I shall just see you and that's all. It's only Robert who is a patriot now, of us two. England, what with the past and present, is a place of

bitterness to me, bitter enough to turn all her seas round to wormwood! Airs and hearts, all are against me in England; yet don't let me be ungrateful. No love is forgotten or less prized, certainly not yours. Only I'm a citizeness of the world now, you see, and float loose.

God bless you, dearest Mr. Kenyon, prays

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Robert's best love as always. He writes by this post to Mr. Procter. How beautifully Sarianna has corrected for the press my new poem! Wonderfully well, really. There is only one error of consequence, which I will ask you to correct in any copy you can — of 'rail' *in the last line*, to 'vail;' the allusion being of course to the Jewish temple — but as it is printed nobody can catch any meaning, I fear. They tell me that the Puseyite organ, the 'Guardian,' has been strong in attack. So best.

After a few weeks in Paris the travellers crossed over to England, which they had not seen for nearly five years. Their visit to London lasted about two months, from the end of July to the end of September, during which time they stayed in lodgings at 26 Devonshire Street.

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Wednesday, [about August 1851].

My ever dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am not ungrateful after all, but I wanted to write a long letter to you (having much to say), and even now it is hard in this confusion to write a short one. We have been overwhelmed with kindnesses, crushed with gifts, like the Roman lady; and literally to drink through a cup of tea from beginning to end without an interruption from the door-bell, we have scarcely attained to since we came. For my part I refuse all dinner invitations except when our dear friend Mr. Kenyon 'imposes

himself as an exception,' in his own words. But even in keeping the resolution there are necessary fatigues; and, do you know, I have not been well since our arrival in England. My first step ashore was into a puddle and a fog, and I began to cough before we reached London. The quality of the air does *not* agree with me, that's evident. For nearly five years I have had no such cough nor difficulty of breathing, and my friends, who at first sight thought me looking well, must forbear all compliments for the future, I think, I get so much paler every day. Next week we send Wilson to see her mother near Sheffield and *the baby with her*, which is a great stroke of fortitude in me; only what I can't bear is to see him crying because she is gone away. So we resolve on letting them both go together. When she returns, ten days or a fortnight after, we shall have to think of going to Paris again; indeed Robert begins to be nervous about me — which is nonsense, but natural enough perhaps.

In regard to Colwall, you are both, my very dear friends, the kindest that you can be. Ah, but dearest, dearest Mrs. Martin, you can *understand*, with the same kindness that you use to me in other things. There is only one event in my life which never loses its bitterness; which comes back on me like a retreating wave, going and coming again, which was and *is my grief — I never had but one brother who loved and comprehended me*. And so there is just one thought which would be unbearable if I went into your neighbourhood; and you won't set it down, I am sure, as unpardonable weakness, much less as affectation, if I confess to you that I *never could bear it*. The past would be too strong for me. As to Hope End, it is nothing. I have been happier in my own home since, than I was there and then. But Torquay has made the neighbourhood of Hope End impossible to me. I could not eat or sleep in that air. You will forgive me for the weakness, I am certain. You know a little, if not entirely, how we loved one another; how I was first with

him, and *he* with me; while God knows that death and separation have no power over such love.

After all, we shall see you in Paris if not in England. We pass this winter in Paris, in the hope of my being able to bear the climate, for indeed Italy is too far. And if the winter does not disagree with me too much we mean to take a house and settle in Paris, so as to be close to you all, and that will be a great joy to me. You will pass through Paris this autumn (won't you?) on your way to Pau, and I shall see you. I do long to see you and make you know my husband. . . .

So far from regretting my marriage, it has made the happiness and honour of my life, and every unkindness received from my own house makes me press nearer to the tenderest and noblest of human hearts, *proved* by the uninterrupted devotion of nearly five years. Husband, lover, nurse — not one of these, has Robert been to me, but all three together. I neither regret my marriage, therefore, nor the manner of it, because the manner of it was a necessity of the act. I thought so at the time, I think so now; and I believe that the world in general will decide (if the world is to be really appealed to) that my opinion upon this subject (after five years) is worth more.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, do write to me. I keep my thoughts as far as I can from bitter things, and the affectionateness of my dearest sisters is indeed much on the other side. Also, we are both giddy with the kind attentions pressed on us from every side, from some of the best in England. It's hard to think at all in such a confusion. We met Tennyson (the Laureate) by a chance in Paris, who insisted that we should take possession of his house and servants at Twickenham and use them as long as we liked to stay in England. Nothing could be more warmly kind, and we accepted the note in which he gave us the right of possession for the sake of the generous autograph, though we never intended in our own minds to act out the proposition.

Since then, Mr. Arnould, the Chancery barrister, has begged us to go and live in his town house (we don't want houses, you see); Mrs. Fanny Kemble called on and left us tickets for her Shakespeare reading (by the way, I was charmed with her 'Hamlet'); Mr. Forster, of the 'Examiner,' gave us a magnificent dinner at Thames Ditton in sight of the swans; and we breakfast on Saturday with Mr. Rogers. Then we have seen the Literary Guild actors at the Hanover Square rooms, and we have passed an evening with Carlyle (one of the great sights in England, to my mind). He is a very warm friend of Robert's, so that on every account I was delighted to see him face to face. I can't tell you what else we have done or not done. It's a great dazzling heap of things new and strange. Barry Cornwall (Mr. Procter) came to see us every day till business swept him out of town, and dear Mrs. Jameson left her Madonna for us in despite of the printers. Such kindness, on all sides. Ah, there's kindness in England after all. Yet I grew cold to the heart as I set foot on the ground of it, and wished myself away. Also, the sort of life is not perhaps the best for me and the sort of climate is really the worst.

You heard of Mr. Kenyon's goodness to us; I told Arabel to tell you.

But I must end here. Another time I will talk of Paris, which I do hope will suit us as a residence. I was quite well there, the three weeks we stayed, and am far from well just now. You see, the weight of the atmosphere, which seems to me like lead, combined with the excitement, is too much at once. Oh, it won't be very bad, I dare say. I mean to try to be quiet, and abjure for the future the night air.

I should not omit to tell you in this quantity of egotism that my husband's father and sister have received me most affectionately. She is highly accomplished, with a heart to suit the head.

Now do write. Let me hear all about you, and how dear Mr. Martin and yourself are. Robert's cordial regards with those of

Your ever affectionate and ever grateful

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Saturday, [about August 1851].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Day by day, and hour by hour almost, I have wanted to thank you again and again for your remedy (which I did not use, by the bye, being much better), and to answer your inquiry about me, which really I could not deliver over to Arabel to answer; but the baby did not go to the country with Wilson, and I have been 'devoted' since she went away; *une âme perdue*, with not an instant out of the four-and-twenty hours to call my own. It appeared, at the last, that Wilson would have a drawback to her enjoyments in having the child, and I did not choose that: she had only a fortnight, you see, after five years, to be with her family. So I took her place with him; it was necessary, for he was in a state of deplorable grief when he missed her, and has refused ever since to allow any human being except me to do a single thing for him. I hold him in my arms at night, dress and wash him in the morning, walk out with him, and am not allowed either to read or write above three minutes at a time. He has learnt to say in English 'No more,' and I am bound to be obedient. Perhaps I may make out five minutes just to write this, for he is playing in the passage with a child of the house, but even so much is doubtful. He has made very good friends with a girl here, and Arabel has sent her maid ever so often to tempt him away for half an hour, so as to give me breathing time, but he won't be tempted: he has it in his head that the world is in a conspiracy against him to take 'mama' away after having taken 'Lily,' and he is bound to resist it.

After all, the place of nursery maid is more suitable to me than that of poetess (or even poet's wife) in this obstreperous London. I was nearly killed the first weeks, what with the climate, and what with the kindness (and what with the want of kindness), and looked wretchedly, whether Reynolds Peyton saw it or not, and coughed day and night, till Robert took fright, and actually fixed a day for taking me forthwith back to Paris. I had to give up a breakfast at Rogers', and shut myself up in two rooms for a week, and refuse, like Wiedeman, to be tempted out anywhere, but, after that, I grew better, and the wind changed, and now the cough, though not gone, is quieted, and I look a different person, and have ceased to grow thin. But a racketing life will never do for me, nor an English atmosphere, I am much afraid. The lungs seem to labour in this heavy air. Oh, it is so unlike the air of the Continent; I say nothing of Florence, but even of Paris, where I do wish to be able to live, on account of the nearness to this dear detestable England.

Now let me tell you of Wimpole Street. Henry has been very kind in coming not infrequently; he has a kind, good heart. Occy, too, I have seen three or four times, Alfred and Sette once. My dearest Arabel is, of course, here once if not twice a day, and for hours at a time, bringing me great joy always, and Henrietta's dear kindness in coming to London on purpose to see me, for a week, has left a perfume in my life. Both those beloved sisters have been, as ever, perfect to me. Arabel is vexed just now, and so am I, my brothers having fixed with papa to go out of town directly, and she caring more to stay where I am. . . .

I have not written to papa since our arrival through my fear of involving Arabel; but as soon as they go to the country I shall *hopelessly* write. He is very well and in good spirits, thank God.

We have spent two days at New Cross with my husband's father and sister, and she has been here con-

stantly. Most affectionate they are to me, and the babe is taken into adoration by Mr. Browning.

But here he is upon me again! Indeed, I have had wonderful luck in having been able to write all this; and now, God bless both of you, my dearest friends. Oh, I do feel to my heart all your kindness in wishing to have us with you, and, indeed, Robert *would* like to see Herefordshire, but ——

[*The remainder of this letter is wanting.*]

To Mrs. Martin

26 Devonshire Street: Wednesday, [September 1851].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I write in haste to you to tell you some things which you should hear without delay.

After Robert's letter to George had been sent three times to Wales and been returned twice, it reached him, and immediately upon its reaching him (to do George justice) he wrote a kind reply to apprise us that he would be at our door the same evening. So the night before last he came, and we are all good friends, thank God. I tenderly love him and the rest, and must for ever deplore that such poor barriers as a pedantic pride can set up should have interposed between long and strong and holy affections for years. But it is past, and I have been very happy in being held in his arms again, and seen in his eyes that I was still something more to him than a stone thrown away. So, if you have thought severely of him, you and dear Mr. Martin, do not any longer. Preserve your friendship for him, my dearest friends, and let all this foolish mistaken past be well past and forgotten. I think him looking thin, though it does not strike them so in Wimpole Street, certainly.

For the rest, the pleasantness is not on every side. It seemed to me right, notwithstanding that dear Mr. Kenyon

advised against it, to apprise my father of my being in England. I could not leave England without trying the possibility of his seeing me once, of his consenting to kiss my child once. So I wrote, and Robert wrote. A manly, true, straightforward letter his was, yet in some parts so touching to me and so generous and conciliating everywhere, that I could scarcely believe in the probability of its being read in vain. In reply he had a very violent and unsparing letter, with all the letters I had written to papa through these five years *sent back unopened, the seals unbroken.* What went most to my heart was that some of the seals were black with black-edged envelopes; so that he might have thought my child or husband dead, yet never cared to solve the doubt by breaking the seal. He said he regretted to have been forced to keep them by him until now, through his ignorance of where he should send them. So there's the end. I cannot, of course, write again. God takes it all into His own hands, and I wait.

We go on Tuesday. If I do not see you (as I scarcely hope to do now), it will be only a gladness delayed for a few months. We shall meet in Paris if we live. May God bless you both, dearest friends. I think of you and love you. Dear Mr. Martin, don't stay too late in England this year, for the climate seems to me worse than ever. Not that I have much cough now — I am much better — but the quality of the atmosphere is unmistakable to my lungs and air passages, and I believe it will be wise, on this account, to go away quickly.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Miss E. F. Haworth[1]

London: September 24, 1851.

My dear Miss Haworth, — I do hope you have not set us quite on the outside of your heart with the unfeeling and ungrateful. I say 'us' when I ought to have said 'me,' for you have known Robert, and you have not known *me*, and I am naturally less safe with you than he is — less safe in your esteem. We should both have gone to inquire after your health if he had not been attacked with influenza, and unfit for anything until the days you mentioned as the probable term of your remaining in town had passed. I waited till he should be better, and the malady lingered. Now he is well, and I do hope you may be so too. May it be! Bear us in mind and love, for we go away to-morrow to Paris — where, however, we shall *expect* you before long. Thank you, thank you, for the books. I have been struck and charmed with some things in the 'Companion' — especially, may I say, with the 'Modern Pygmalion,' which catches me on my weak side of the *love of wonder*. By the way, what am I to say of Swedenborg and mesmerism? So much I could — the books have so drawn and held me (as far as I was capable of being drawn or held, in this chaos of London) — that I will not speak at all. The note-page is too small — the haste I write in, too great.

God bless you, and good bye. Robert bids me give you his love (of the earnestest), and I have leave from you (have I not?) to be always affectionately yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[1] Miss Haworth was a friend of Mr. Browning from very early days, and was commemorated by him in 'Sordello' under the name of 'Eyebright' (see Mrs. Orr's *Life*, p. 86). Her acquaintance with Mrs. Browning began with this visit to London, and ripened into a warm friendship. One subject of interest which they had in common was mesmerism, with the attendant mysteries of spiritualism and Swedenborgianism; and references to these are frequent in Mrs. Browning's letters to her.

The journey to Paris was effected at the end of September, and for about nine months they pitched their tent at No. 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées. It was a fortunate time to be in Paris for those who had no personal nervousness, and liked to be near the scene of great events — a most anxious time for any who were alarmed at disturbances, or took keenly to heart the horrors of street fighting. Fortunately for the Brownings, they, whether by temperament or through their Italian experiences, were not unduly disturbed at revolutions, while the horrors of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* were, no doubt, only partly known to Mrs. Browning at the time, and were palliated to her by the view she took of Napoleon's character. She had not, it is true, raised him as yet to the pinnacle on which his intervention on behalf of Italy subsequently caused her to place him, but (perhaps owing to what Mr. Kenyon called her 'immoral sympathy with power') she was always disposed to put a favourable construction on his actions, and the *coup d'état* was finally whitewashed for her by the approbation which the *plébiscite* of December 20 gave to his assumption of supreme power. Her views are, however, so fully set forth in her own letters that they need not be detailed here. For her husband's opinion of the character of Louis Napoleon, at least as it appeared to him when looking back after the lapse of years, it is only necessary to refer to 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.'

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
October 21, [1851].

But didn't you, dearest friend, get 'Casa Guidi' and the portrait of Mad^me^ de Goethe, left for you in the London house? I felt a *want* of leaving a word of adieu with these, and then the chaotic confusion in which we left England stifled the better purpose out of me.

With such mixed feelings I went away. Leaving love behind is always terrible, but it was not all love that I left, and there was relief in the state of mind with which I threw myself on the sofa at Dieppe — yes, indeed. Robert felt differently from me for once, as was natural, for it had been pure joy to him with his family and his friends, and I do believe he would have been capable of never leaving England again, had such an arrangement been practicable for us on some accounts. Oh England! I love and hate it at once. Or rather, where love of country ought to be in the heart, there is the mark of the burning iron in mine, and the depth of the scar shows the depth of the root of it. Well, I am writing you an amusing letter to-day, I think. After all, I wasn't made to live in England, or I should not cough there perpetually; while no sooner do I get to Paris than the cough vanishes — it is all but gone now. The lightness of the air here makes the place tenable — so far, at least. We made many an effort to get an apartment near the Madeleine, but we had to sacrifice sun or money, or breath, in going up to the top of a house, and the sacrifice seemed too great upon consideration, and we came off to the 'Avenue des Champs-Elysées,' on the sunshiny side of the way, to a southern aspect, and pretty cheerful carpeted rooms — a drawing room, a dressing and writing room for Robert, a small dining room, two comfortable bedrooms and a third bedroom upstairs for the *femme de service*, kitchen, &c., for two hundred francs a month. Not too dear, we think. About the same that we paid, out of the season, in London for the miserable accommodation we had there. But perhaps you won't come near us now; we may be too much 'out of the way' for you. Is it so indeed? Understand that close by us is a stand of *coupés* and *fiacres*, not to profane your ears with the mention of the continual stream of omnibuses by means of which you may reach the other end of Paris for six sous. And there might be a possibility

of taking a small apartment for you in this very house. See how I castle-build.

But if the Crystal Palace vanishes from the face of the earth, who shall trust any more in castles? Will they really pull it down, do you think? If it's a bubble, it's a glass bubble, and not meant, therefore, for bursting in the air, it seems to me. And you do want a place in England for sculpture, and also to show people how olives grow. What a beautiful winter garden it would be! But they will pull it down, perhaps; and then the last we shall have seen of it will be in this description of your letter, and *that's* seeing it worthily, too.

We were from home last night; we went to Lady Elgin's reception, and met a Madame Mohl, who was entertaining, and is to come to us this morning ——

She came as I wrote those words. She knows *you*, among her other advantages, and we have been talking of you, dear friend, and we are going to her on Friday evening to see some of the French. I shall have to go to prison very soon, I suppose, as usual, for the winter months, for here is the twenty-first of October, though this is the first fire we have had occasion for. It was colder this morning, but we have had exquisite weather, really, ever since we left England.

The 'elf' is flourishing in all good fairyhood, with a scarlet rose leaf on each cheek. Wilson says she never knew him to have such an irreproachable appetite. He is charmed with Paris, and its magnificent Punches, and roundabouts, and balloons — which last he says, looking up after them gravely, 'go to God.' The child has curious ideas about theology already. He is of opinion that God 'lives among the birds.' He has taken to calling himself '*Peninni*,'[1] which sounds something like a fairy's name, though he means it for 'Wiedeman.'

[1] So spelt in the earlier letters, but subsequently modified to 'Penini.'

Robert is in good spirits, and inclined to like Paris increasingly. Do you know I think you have an idea in England that you monopolise comforts, and I, for one, can't admit it. These snug 'apartments' exclude the draughty passages and staircases, which threaten your life every time that you run to your bedroom for a pocket-handkerchief in England. I much prefer the continental houses to the English ones, both for winter and summer, on this account.

So glad I am that you are nearly at the end of your work. To rest after work, what more than rest that always is!

Write to us often — do! We are not in Italy, and you have no excuse for even *seeming* to forget us. We are full in sight still, remember.

Are you aware that Carlyle travelled with us to Paris? He left a deep impression with me. It is difficult to conceive of a more interesting human soul, I think. All the bitterness is love with the point reversed. He seems to me to have a profound sensibility — so profound and turbulent that it unsettles his general sympathies. Do you guess what I mean the least in the world? or is it as dark as my writings are of course?

I hope on every account you will have no increase of domestic care. How is Miss Procter? How kind everybody was to us in England, and how affectionately we remember it! God bless you yourself! We love you for the past and the present, besides the future in December.

Your attached

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
October 22, [1851].

The pause in writing has come from the confusion in living, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, and no worse cause. It was a long while before we could settle ourselves in a private apartment, and we had to stay at the hotel and

wander about like doves turned out of the dove-cote, and seeking where to inhabit. . . . We have seen nothing in Paris, except the shell of it, yet. No theatres — nothing but business. Yet two evenings ago we hazarded going to a 'reception' at Lady Elgin's, in the Faubourg St. Germain, and saw some French, but nobody of distinction. It is a good house, I believe, and she has an earnest face which must mean something. We were invited, and *are* invited to go every Monday, and that Monday in particular, between eight and twelve. You go in a morning dress, and there is tea. Nothing can be more *sans façon*, and my tremors (for, do you know, I was quite nervous on the occasion, and charged Robert to keep close to me) were perfectly unjustified by the event. You see it was an untried form of society — like trying a Turkish bath. I expected to see Balzac's duchesses and *hommes de lettres* on all sides of me, but there was nothing very noticeable, I think, though we found it agreeable enough. We go on Friday evening to a Madame Mohl's, where we are to have some of the 'celebrities,' I believe, for she seems to know everybody of all colours, from white to red. Then Mazzini is to give us a letter to George Sand — come what will, we must have a letter to George Sand — and Robert has one to Emile Lorquet of the 'National,' and Gavarni of the 'Charivari,' so that we shall manage to thrust our heads into this atmosphere of Parisian journalism, and learn by experience how it smells. I hear that George Sand is seldom at Paris now. She has devoted herself to play writing, and employs a houseful of men, her son's friends and her own, in acting privately with her what she writes — trying it on a home stage before she tries it at Paris. Her son is a very ordinary young man of three-and-twenty, but she is fond of him. . . .

Never expect me to agree with you in that *cause célèbre* of 'ladies and gentlemen' against people of letters. I don't like the sort of veneer which passes in society — yes, I

like it, but I don't love it. I know what the thing is worth as a matter of furniture-accomplishment, and there an end. I should rather look at the scratched silent violin in the corner, with the sense that music has come out of it or will come. I am grateful to the man who has written a good book, and I recognise reverently that the roots of it are in him. And, do you know, I was not disappointed at all in what I saw of writers of books in London; no, not at all. Carlyle, for instance, I liked infinitely more in his personality than I expected to like him, and I saw a great deal of him, for he travelled with us to Paris and spent several evenings with us, we three together. He is one of the most interesting men I could imagine even, deeply interesting to me; and you come to understand perfectly, when you know him, that his bitterness is only melancholy, and his scorn sensibility. Highly picturesque too he is in conversation. The talk of writing men is very seldom as good.

And, do you know, I was much taken, in London, with a young authoress, Geraldine Jewsbury. You have read her books. There's a French sort of daring, half-audacious power in them, but she herself is quiet and simple, and drew my heart out of me a good deal. I felt inclined to love her in our half-hour's intercourse. And I liked Lady Eastlake too in another way, the 'lady' of the 'Letters from the Baltic,' nay, I liked her better than the 'lady.' . . .

Do write to me and tell me of your house, whether you are settling down in it comfortably.[1] In every new house there's a good deal of bird's work in treading and shuffling down the loose sticks and straws, before one can feel it is to be a nest. Robert laughs at me sometimes for pushing about the chairs and tables in a sort of distracted way, but it's the very instinct of making a sympathetical home, that works in me. We were miserably off in London. I

[1] Miss Mitford had lately moved into her new home at Swallowfield, about three miles from the old cottage at Three Mile Cross, commemorated in 'Our Village.'

couldn't tuck myself in anyhow. And we enjoy in proportion these luxurious armchairs, so good for the Lollards.

People say that the troops which pass before our windows every few days through the 'Arc de l'Étoile' to be reviewed, will bring the president back with them as 'emperor' some sunny morning not far off. As to waiting till *May*, nobody expects it. There is a great inward agitation, but the surface of things is smooth enough. Be constant, be constant! Constancy is a rare virtue even where it is not an undeniable piece of wisdom. Vive Napoleon II.!

As to the book, ah, you are always, and have always been, too good to *me*, that's quite certain; and if you are not too good to my husband, it is only because I am persuaded in my secret soul nobody *can* be too good to him.

He sends you his warm regards, and I send you a kiss of baby's, who is finishing his Babylonish education, unfortunate child, by learning a complement of French. I assure you he understands everything you can say to him in English as well as Italian, so that we won't be utterly denationalised.

God bless you. Say how you are and write soon.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
November 12, 1851.

I see your house, my beloved friend, and clap my hands for pleasure. It will suit you admirably, I see, plainly from Paris, and how right you are about the pretty garden, not to make it fine and modern; you have the right instincts about such things, and are too strong for Mrs. Loudon and the landscape gardeners. The only defect apparent to me at this distance is the size of the sitting room. . . . If you were to see what we call 'an apartment' in Paris! We have just a slip of a kitchen, and no passage, no staircase to take

up the space, which is altogether *spent* upon sitting and sleeping rooms. Talk of English comforts! It's a national delusion. The comfort of the continental way of life has only to be tested to be recognised (with the exception of the locks of doors and windows, which are *barbaric* here, there's no other word for it). The economy of a habitation is understood in Paris. You have the advantages of a large house without the disadvantages, without the coldness, without the dearness. And the beds, chairs and sofas are perfect things.

But the climate is not perfect, it seems, for we have had very cold weather the last ten days, and I am a prisoner as usual. Our friends swear to us that it is exceptional weather and that it will be warmer presently, and I listen with a sort of 'doubtful doubt' worthy of a metaphysician. It is some comfort to hear that it's below zero in London meanwhile, and that Scotland stands eight feet deep in snow.

We have a letter for George Sand (directed *à Madame George Sand*) from Mazzini, and we hear that she is to be in Paris within twelve days. Then we must make a rush and present it, for her stay here is not likely to be long, and I would not miss seeing her for a great deal, though I have not read one of her late dramas, and only by faith understand that her wonderful genius has conquered new kingdoms. Her last romance, 'Le Château des Desserts,' is treated disdainfully in the 'Athenæum.' I have not read *that* even, but Mr. Chorley is apt to be cold towards French writers and I don't expect his judgment as final therefore. Have you seen M. de la Mare's correspondence with Mirabeau? And do you ever catch sight of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes'? In the August number is an excellent and most pleasant article on my husband, elaborately written and so highly appreciatory as well nigh to satisfy *me*.[1] 'Set you down this' that there

[1] The article was by M. Joseph Milsand, and led to the formation of the warm friendship between him and Mr. Browning which lasted until the death of the former in 1886.

has sprung up in France lately an ardent admiration of the present English schools of poetry, or rather of the poetry produced by the present English schools, which they consider *an advance upon the poetry of the ages*. Think of *this*, you English readers who are still wearing broad hems and bombazeens for the Byron and Scott glorious days!

Let me think what I can tell you of the president. I have never seen his face, though he has driven past me in the boulevards, and past these windows constantly, but it is said that he is very like his portraits — and, yes, rumour and the gazettes speak of his riding well. Wilson and Wiedeman had an excellent view of him the other day as he turned into a courtyard to pay some visit, and she tells me that his carriage was half full of petitions and nosegays thrown through the windows. What a fourth act of a play we are in just now! It is difficult to guess at the catastrophe. Certainly he must be very sure of his hold on the people to propose repealing the May edict,[1] and yet there are persons who persist in declaring that nobody cares for him and that even a revision of the constitution will not bring about his re-election. *I* am of an opposite mind; though there is not much overt enthusiasm of the population in behalf of his person. Still, this may arise from a quiet resolve to keep him where he is, and an assurance that he can't be ousted in spite of the people and army. It is significant, I think, that Emile de Girardin should stretch out a hand (a little dirty, be it observed in passing), and that Lamartine, after fasting nineteen days and nights (a miraculous fast, without fear of the 'prefect'), should murmur a 'credo' in favour of his honesty. As to honesty, 'I do believe he's honest;' that is to say, he has acted out no dishonesty *as yet*, and we have no right to interpret

[1] The May edict restricted the franchise to electors who had resided three years in the same district. In October Louis Napoleon proposed to repeal it, and the refusal of the Assembly no doubt strengthened his hold on the democracy.

doubtful texts into dishonorable allegations. But for ambition — for ambition! Answer from the depth of your conscience, 'de profundis.' Is he or is he not an ambitious man? Does he or does he not mean in his soul to be Napoleon the Second? Yes, yes — I think, you think, we all think.

Robert's father and sister have been paying us a visit during the last three weeks. They are very affectionate to me, and I love them for his sake and their own, and am very sorry at the thought of losing them, which we are on the point of doing. We hope, however, to establish them in Paris if we can stay, and if no other obstacle should arise before the spring, when they must leave Hatcham. Little Wiedeman *draws* that; as you may suppose, he is adored by his grandpapa; and then, Robert! they are an affectionate family and not easy when removed one from another. Sarianna is full of accomplishment and admirable sense, even-tempered and excellent in all ways — devoted to her father as she was to her mother: indeed, the relations of life seem reversed in their case, and the father appears the child of the child. . . .

Perhaps you have not seen Eugène Sue's 'Mystères de Paris' — and I am not deep in the first volume yet. Fancy the wickedness and stupidity of trying to revive the distinctions and hatreds of race between the Gauls and Franks. The Gauls, please to understand, are the 'proletaires,' and the capitalists are the Frank invaders (call them Cosaques, says Sue) out of the forests of Germany! . . .

I saw no Mr. Harness; and no Talfourd of any kind. The latter was a kind of misadventure, as Lady Talfourd was on the point of calling on me when Robert would not let her. We were going away just then. Mr. Horne I had the satisfaction of seeing several times — you know how much regard I feel for him. One evening he had the kindness to bring his wife miles upon miles just to drink tea with us, and we were to have spent a day with them

somehow, half among the fields, but engagements came betwixt us adversely. She is less pretty and more interesting than I expected — looking very young, her black glossy hair hanging down her back in ringlets; with deep earnest eyes, and a silent listening manner. He was full of the 'Household Words,' and seems to write articles together with Dickens — which must be highly unsatisfactory, as Dickens's name and fame swallow up every sort of minor reputation in the shadow of his path. I shouldn't like, for my part (and if I were a fish), to herd with crocodiles. But I suppose the 'Household Words' *pay* — and that's a consideration. 'Claudie' I have not read. We have only just subscribed to a library, and we have been absorbed a good deal by our visitors. . . .

Write and don't leave off loving me. I will tell you of everybody noticeable whom I happen to see, and of George Sand among the first.

Love your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
December 10, [1851].

I receive your letter, dearest friend, and hasten to write a few brief words to save the post.

We have suffered neither fear nor danger — and I would not have missed the grand spectacle of the second of December[1] for anything in the world — scarcely, I say, for the sight of the Alps.

On the only day in which there was much fighting (Thursday), Wiedeman was taken out to walk as usual, under the precaution of keeping in the immediate neighbourhood of this house. This will prove to you how little we have feared for ourselves.

[1] The *coup d'état* took place in the early morning of December 2.

But the natural emotion of the situation one could not escape from, and on Thursday night I sate up in my dressing gown till nearly one, listening to the distant firing from the boulevards. Thursday was the only day in which there was fighting of any serious kind. There has been *no resistance* on the part of the real people — nothing but sympathy for the president, I *believe*, if you except the natural mortification and disappointment of baffled parties. To judge from our own tradespeople: 'il a bien fait! c'est le vrai neveu de son oncle!' such phrases rung on every tone expressed the prevailing sentiment.

For my own part I have not only more hope in the situation but more faith in the French people than is ordinary among the English, who really try to exceed one another in discoloration and distortion of the circumstances. The government was in a dead lock — what was to be done? Yes, all parties cried out, 'What was to be done?' and felt that we were waist deep a fortnight ago in a state of crisis. In throwing back the sovereignty from a 'representative assembly' which had virtually ceased to represent, into the hands of the people, I think that Louis Napoleon did well. The talk about 'military despotism' is absolute nonsense. The French army is eminently civic, and nations who take their ideas from the very opposite fact of a *standing army* are far from understanding how absolutely a French soldier and French citizen are the same thing. The independence of the elections seems to be put out of reach of injury; and intelligent men of adverse opinions to the government think that the majority will be large in its favour. Such a majority would certainly justify Louis Napoleon, or *should* — even with you in England.

I think you quite understate the amount of public virtue in France. The difficulties of statesmanship here are enormous. I do not accuse even M. Thiers of want of public virtue. What he has wanted, has been length and breadth of view — purely an intellectual defect — and his

petty, puny *tracasseries* destroyed the Republican Assembly just as it destroyed the throne of Louis Philippe, in spite of his own intentions.

There is a conflict of ideas in France, which we have no notion of in England, but we ought to understand that it does not involve the failing of *principle*, in the elemental moral sense. Be just to France, dear friend, you who are more than an Englishwoman — a Mrs. Jameson!

Everything is perfectly tranquil in Paris, I assure you — theatres full and galleries open as usual. At the same time, timid and discouraged persons say, 'Wait till after the elections,' and of course the public emotion will be a good deal excited at that time. Therefore, judge for yourself. For my own part I have not had the slightest cause for alarm of any kind — and there is my child! Judge. . . .

The weather is exquisite, and I am going out to walk directly. It is scarcely possible to bear a fire, and some of our friends sit with the window open. We are all well.

This should have gone to you yesterday, but we had visitors who talked past post time. The delay, however, has allowed of my writing more than I meant to have done in beginning this letter. Robert's best love.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

Robert says that according to the impression of the wisest there can be no danger. Don't wait till after the elections. The time is most interesting, and it is well worth your while to come and see for yourself.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
December 11, [1851].

To show how alive I am, dearest Mrs. Martin, I will tell you that I have just come home from a long walk to the Tuileries. We took a carriage to return, that's true. Then

yesterday I was out, besides, and last Saturday, *the 6th*, we drove down the boulevards to see the field of action on the terrible Thursday (the only day on which there was any fighting of consequence), counting the holes in the walls bored by the cannon, and looking at the windows smashed in. Even then, though the asphalte was black with crowds, the quiet was absolute, and most of the shops reopened. On Sunday the theatres were as full as usual, and our Champs-Elysées had quite its complement of promenaders. Wiedeman's prophecy had not been carried out, any more than the prophecies of the wiser may — the soldiers had not shot Punch.

And now I do beg you not to be down-hearted. See, if French blood runs in your veins, that you don't take a pedantic view of this question like an Englishwoman. Constitutional forms and essential principles of liberty are so associated in England, that they are apt to be confounded, and are, in fact, constantly confounded. For my part, I am too good a democrat to be afraid of being thrown back upon the primitive popular element, from impossible paper constitutions and unrepresenting representative assemblies. The situation was in a dead lock, and all the conflicting parties were full of dangerous hope of taking advantage of it; and I don't see, for my part, what better could be done for the French nation than to sweep the board clear and bid them begin again. With no sort of prejudice in favour of Louis Napoleon (except, I confess to you, some artistical admiration for the consummate ability and courage shown in his *coup d'état*), with no particular faith in the purity of his patriotism, I yet hold him justified *so far*, that is, I hold that a pure patriot would be perfectly justifiable in taking the same steps which up to this moment he has taken. He has broken, certainly, the husk of an oath, but fidelity to the intention of it seems to me reconcilable with the breach; and if he had not felt that he had the great mass of the people to back him, he is at least too able a man, be certain,

if not too honest a man, to have dared what he has dared. You will see the result of the elections. As to Paris, don't believe that Paris suffers violence from Louis Napoleon. The result of my own impressions is a conviction that *from the beginning* he had the sympathy of the whole population here with him, to speak generally, and exclusively of particular parties. All our tradespeople, for instance, milkman, breadman, wine merchant, and the rest, yes, even the shrewd old washerwoman, and the concierge, and our little lively servant were in a glow of sympathy and admiration. 'Mais, c'est le vrai neveu de son oncle! il est admirable! enfin la patrie sera sauvée.' The bourgeoisie has now accepted the situation, it is admitted on all hands. 'Scandalous adhesion!' say some. 'Dreadful apathy!' say others. Don't *you* say either one or the other, or I think you will be unjust to Paris and France.

The French people are very democratical in their tendencies, but they must have a visible type of hero-worship, and they find it in the bearer of that name Napoleon. That name is the only tradition dear to them, and it is deeply dear. That a man bearing it, and appealing at the same time to the whole people upon democratical principles, should be answered from the heart of the people, should neither astonish, nor shame, nor enrage anybody.

An editor of the 'National,' a friend of ours, feels this so much, that he gnashes his teeth over the imprudence of the extreme Reds, who did not set themselves to trample out the fires of Buonapartism while they had some possibility of doing it. 'Ce peuple a la tête *dure*,' said he vehemently.

As to military despotism, would France bear *that*, do you think? Is the French army, besides, made after the fashion of standing armies, such as we see in other countries? Are they not eminently *civic*, flesh of the people's flesh? I fear no military despotism for France, oh, none. Every soldier is a citizen, and every citizen is or has been a soldier.

Altogether, instead of despairing, I am full of hope. It seems to me probable that the door is open to a wider and calmer political liberty than France has yet enjoyed. Let us wait.

The American *forms* of republicanism are most uncongenial to this artistic people; but democratical institutions will deepen and broaden, I think, even if we should soon all be talking of the 'Empire.'

As to the repressive measures, why, grant the righteousness of the movement, and you must accept its conditions. Don't believe the tremendous exaggerations you are likely to hear on all sides — don't, I beseech you.

The president rode under our windows on December 2, through a shout extending from the Carrousel to the Arc de l'Etoile. The troops poured in as we stood and looked. No sight could be grander, and I would not have missed it, not for the Alps, I say.

You say nothing specific. How I should like to know *why* exactly you are out of spirits, and whether dear Mr. Martin is sad too. Robert and I have had some domestic *émeutes*, because he hates some imperial names; yet he confessed to me last night that the excessive and contradictory nonsense he had heard among Legitimists, Orleanists, and *English*, against the movement inclined him almost to a revulsion of feeling.

I would have written to you to-day, even if I had not received your letter. You will forgive that what I have written should have been scratched in the utmost haste to save the post. I can't even read it over. There's the effect of going out to walk the first thing in the morning. . . .

Your ever affectionate

Ba — to both of you.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
Christmas Eve, [1851].

What can you have thought of me? That I was shot or deserved to be? Forgive in the first instance, dearest friend, and believe that I won't behave so any more, if in any way I can help it.

Tell me your thought now about L. Napoleon. He rode under our windows on December 2 through an immense shout from the Carrousel to the Arc de l'Etoile. There was the army and the sun of Austerlitz, and even I thought it one of the grandest of sights; for he rode there in the name of the people, after all. . . .

But we know men most opposed to him, writers of the old 'Presse' and 'National,' and Orleanists, and Legitimists, and the fury of all such I can scarcely express to you after the life. Emile de Girardin and his friends had a sublime scheme of going over in a body to England, and establishing a Socialist periodical, inscribing on their new habitation, 'Ici c'est la France.' He actually advertised for sale his beautiful house close by in the Champs-Elysées, asked ten thousand pounds (English) for it; and would have been 'rather disappointed,' as one of his sympathising friends confessed to us, if the offer had been accepted. I heard a good story the other day. A lady visitor was groaning politically to Madame de Girardin over the desperateness of the situation. 'Il n'y a que Celui, qui est en haut, qui peut nous en tirer,' said she, casting up her eyes. 'Oui, c'est vrai,' replied Madame, 'il le pourrait, lui,' glancing towards the second floor, where Emile was at work upon feuilletons. Not that she mistakes him habitually for her deity, by any manner of means, if scandal is to be listened to.

I hear that Lamennais is profoundly disgusted. He

said to a friend of ours, that the French people were 'putrefied to the heart.' Which means that they have one tradition still dear to them (the name of Napoleon) and that they put no faith in the Socialistic prophets. Wise or unwise they may be accordingly; but an affection and an apprehension can't reasonably be said to amount to a 'putrefaction,' I think. No, indeed.

Louis Napoleon is said to say (a bitter foe of his told me this) that 'there will be four phrases of his life.' The first was all rashness and imprudence, but 'it was necessary to make him known:' the second, 'the struggle with and triumph over anarchy:' the third, 'the settlement of France and the pacification of Europe:' the fourth, a *coup de pistolet. Se non è vero, è ben trovato.* Nothing is more likely than the catastrophe in any case; and the violence of the passions excited in the minority makes me wonder at his surviving a day even. Do you know I heard your idol of a Napoleon (the antique hero) called the other evening through a black beard and gnashing teeth, 'le plus grand scélérat du monde,' and his empire, 'le règne du Satan,' and his marshals, 'les coquins.' After that, I won't tell you that 'le neveu' is reproached with every iniquity possible to anybody's public and private life. Perhaps he is not 'sans reproche' in respect to the latter, not altogether; but one can't believe, and oughtn't, even infinitesimally, the things which are talked on the subject. . . .

Ah, I am so vexed about George Sand. She came, she has gone, and we haven't met! There was a M. François who pretended to be her very very particular friend, and who managed the business so particularly ill, from some motive or some incapacity, that he did not give us an opportunity of presenting our letter. He did not '*dare*' to present it for us, he said. She is shy — she distrusts book-making strangers, and she intended to be incognita while in Paris. He proposed that we should leave it at the theatre, and Robert refused. Robert said he wouldn't have our

letter mixed up with the love letters of the actresses, or perhaps given to the 'premier comique' to read aloud in the green room, as a relief to the 'Chère adorable,' which had produced so much laughter. Robert was a little proud and M. François very stupid; and I, between the two, in a furious state of dissent from either. Robert tries to smooth down my ruffled plumage now, by promising to look out for some other opportunity, but the late one has gone. She is said to have appeared in Paris in a bloom of recovered beauty and brilliancy of eyes, and the success of her play, 'Le Mariage de Victorine,' was complete. A strange, wild, wonderful woman, certainly. While she was here, she used a bedroom which belongs to her son — a mere 'chambre de garçon' — and for the rest, saw whatever friends she chose to see only at the 'café' where she breakfasted and dined. She has just finished a romance, we hear, and took fifty-two nights to write it. She writes only at night. People call her Madame Sand. There seems to be no other name for her in society or letters.

Now listen. Alexander Dumas *does* write his own books, that's a fact. You know I always maintained it, through the odour of Dumas in the books, but people swore the contrary with great foolish oaths worth nothing. Maquet prepares historical materials, gathers together notes, and so on, but Dumas writes every word of his books with his own hand, and with a facility amounting to inspiration, said my informant. He called him a great savage negro child. If he has twenty sous and wants bread, he buys a pretty cane instead. For the rest, "bon enfant,' kind and amiable. An inspired negro child! In debt at this moment, after all the sums he has made, said my informant — himself a most credible witness and highly cultivated man.

I heard of Eugène Sue, too, yesterday. Our child is invited to a Christmas tree and party, and Robert says he is too young to go, but I persist in sending him for half an hour with Wilson — oh, really I must — though he will be by

far the youngest of the thirty children invited. The lady of the house, Miss Fitton, an English resident in Paris, an elderly woman, shrewd and kind, said to Robert that she had a great mind to have Eugène Sue, only he was so scampish. I think that was the word, or something alarmingly equivalent. Now I should like to see Eugène Sue with my little innocent child in his arms; the idea of the combination pleases me somewhat. But I sha'n't see it in any case. We had three cold days last week, which brought back my cough and took away my voice. I am dumb for the present and can't go out any more. . . .

At last I have caught sight of an advertisement of your book. A very catching title, and if I mayn't compliment you upon it, I certainly do your publisher. I dare say the book is charming, and the more of yourself in it, the more charming.

Write, and say how you are always when you write. Say, too, how you continue to like your new house. We heard a good deal of you from Mr. Fields, though he came to us only once. With him came Mr. Longfellow, the poet's brother, who is at present in Paris — I mean the brother, not the poet. Robert's love, may I say?

Wiedeman has struck up two friendships: one, with the small daughter of our concierge and one with a little Russian princess, a month younger than himself. He calls them both 'boys,' having no idea yet of the less sublime sex, but he likes the plebeian best. May God make you happy on this and other seasons.

Love your affectionate and grateful

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
January 17, [1852].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — If you think I have not written to you, you must be (as you are) the most lenient of friends,

not to give me up for ever. I answered your first letter by return of post and at great length. About a fortnight ago, Robert heard from Madame Mohl, who heard from somebody at Pau that you were 'waiting anxiously to hear from me,' upon which I wrote a second letter. And that, too, did not reach you? Is it possible? But I am innocent, innocent, innocent. See how innocent. Now, if M. le Président has stopped my letters, or if he ponders in his imperial mind how to send me out of Paris, he is as ungrateful as a king, because I have been taking his part all this time at a great cost of domestic *émeutes*. So you would have known, if you had received my letters. The *coup d'état* was a grand thing, dramatically and poetically speaking, and the appeal to the people justified it in my eyes, considering the immense difficulty of the circumstances, the impossibility of the old constitution and the impracticability of the house of assembly. Now that's all over. For the rest — the new constitution — I can't say as much for it; it disappoints me immensely. Absolute government, *no*, while the taxes and acceptance of law lies, as he leaves it, with the people; but there are stupidities undeniable, I am afraid, and how such a constitution is to *work*, and how marshals and cardinals are to help to work it, remains to be seen. I fear we have not made a good change even from the 'constitution Marrast'[1] after all. The English newspapers have made me so angry, that I scarcely know whether I am as much ashamed, yet the shame is very great. As if the people of France had not a right to vote as they pleased![2] We understand nothing in England. As Cousin said, long ago, we are 'insular' of understanding. France may be mistaken in her speculations, as she often is; and if any mistake has been lately committed, it will be corrected by herself in a short time. Ignoble in her speculations she never is. . . .

[1] The constitution of 1848.

[2] The point was rather whether they had the *power*.

I must tell you, my dearest friend, that for some days past I have been very much upset, and am scarcely now fairly on my feet. again, in consequence of becoming suddenly aware of a painful indiscretion committed by an affectionate and generous woman. I refer to Miss Mitford's account of me in her new book.[1] We heard of it in a strange way, through M. Philaret Chasles, of the Collège de France, beginning a course of lectures on English literature, and announcing an extended notice of E. B. B., 'the veil from whose private life had lately been raised by Miss Mitford.' Somebody who happened to be present told us of it, and while we were wondering and uncomfortable, up came a writer in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' to consult Robert upon a difficulty he was in. He was engaged, he said, upon an article relating to me, and the proprietors of the review had sent him a number of the 'Athenæum,' which contained an extract from Miss M.'s book, desiring him to make use of the biographical details. Now it struck him immediately, he said, on reading the passage, that it was likely to give me great pain, and he was so unwilling to be the means of giving me more pain that he came to Robert to ask him how he should act. Do observe the delicacy and sensibility of this man — a man, a foreigner, a Frenchman! I shall be grateful to him as long as I live.[2]

Robert has seen the extract in the 'Athenæum.' It refers to the great affliction of my life, with the most affectionate intentions and the obtusest understanding. I know I am morbid, but this thing should not have been done indeed. Now, I shall be liable to see recollections dreadful

[1] Miss Mitford's *Recollections of a Literary Life* contained a chapter relating to Robert and Elizabeth Browning, in which, with the best intentions in the world, she told the story of the drowning of Edward Barrett, and of the gloom cast by it on his sister's life. It was this revival of the greatest sorrow of her life that so upset Mrs. Browning.

[2] No doubt M. Milsand was the writer in question.

to me, thrust into every vulgar notice of my books. I shall be afraid to see my books reviewed anywhere. Oh! I have been so deeply shaken by all this. *You* will understand, I am certain, and I could not help speaking of it to you, because I was certain.

I am answering your note, observe, by return of post. Do let me know if you receive what I write this time. Robert will direct for me, having faith in his superior legibleness, and I accept the insult implied in the opinion.

God bless you. Do write. And never doubt my grateful affection for you, whether posts go ill or well.

Robert is going out to inquire about 'My Novel.' His warm regards with mine to dear Mr. Martin and yourself. This is a scratch rather than a letter, but I would rather send it to you in haste than wait for another post.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

The following letter marks the beginning of a new friendship, with Miss Mulock, afterwards Mrs. Craik, the authoress of 'John Halifax, Gentleman.' The subsequent letters are in very affectionate tones, but it does not appear that the correspondence ever reached any very extended dimensions.

To Miss Mulock

Paris, 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
January 21, [1852].

I hear from England that you have dedicated a book to me with too kind and most touching words. To thank you for such a proof of sympathy, to thank you from my heart, cannot surely be a wrong thing to do, it seems so natural and comes from so irresistible an impulse.

I read a book of yours once at Florence, which first made [me] know you pleasantly, and afterwards (that was at Florence, too) there came a piercing touch from a hand in the air — whether yours also, I cannot dare to guess — which

has preoccupied me a good deal since. If I speak to you in mysteries, forgive me. Let it be clear at least, that I am very happy to be grateful to you for the honor you have done me in your dedication, and that my husband, moved more, as he always is, by honor paid to me than to himself, thanks you beside. I will not keep back his thanks, which are worth more than mine can be.

For the rest, we have, neither of us, seen the book yet, nor even read an exact copy of the words in question. Only the rumour of them appears to run that I am 'not likely ever to see you.' And why am I never to see you, pray? Unlikelier pleasures have been granted to me, and I will not indeed lose hold of the hope of this pleasure.

Allow it to

Your always obliged

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
[January–February 1852].

My very dear friend, let me begin what I have to say by recognising you as the most generous and affectionate of friends. I never could mistake the least of your intentions; you were always, from first to last, kind and tenderly indulgent to me — always exaggerating what was good in me, always forgetting what was faulty and weak — keeping me by force of affection in a higher place than I could aspire to by force of vanity; loving me always, in fact. Now let me tell you the truth. It will prove how hard it is for the tenderest friends to help paining one another, since *you* have pained *me*. See what a deep wound I must have in me, to be pained by the touch of such a hand. Oh, I am morbid, I very well know. But the truth is that I have been miserably upset by your book, and that if I had had the least imagination of your intending to touch upon

certain biographical details in relation to me, I would have conjured you by your love to me and by my love to you, to forbear it altogether. You cannot understand; no, you cannot understand with all your wide sympathy (perhaps, because you are not morbid, and I am), the sort of susceptibility I have upon one subject. I have lived heart to heart (for instance) with my husband these five years: I have never yet spoken out, in a whisper even, what is in me; never yet could find heart or breath; never yet could bear to hear a word of reference from his lips. And now those dreadful words are going the round of the newspapers, to be verified here, commented on there, gossiped about everywhere; and I, for my part, am frightened to look at a paper as a child in the dark — as unreasonably, you will say — but what then? what drives us mad is our unreason. I will tell you how it was. First of all, an English acquaintance here told us that she had been hearing a lecture at the Collège de France, and that the professor, M. Philaret Chasles, in the introduction to a series of lectures on English poetry, had expressed his intention of noticing Tennyson, Browning, &c., and E. B. B. — 'from whose private life the veil had been raised in so interesting a manner lately by Miss Mitford.' In the midst of my anxiety about this, up comes a writer of the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' to my husband, to say that he was preparing a review upon me and had been directed by the editor to make use of some biographical details extracted from your book into the 'Athenæum,' but that it had occurred to him doubtfully whether certain things might not be painful to me, and whether I might not prefer their being omitted in his paper. (All this time we had seen neither book nor 'Athenæum.') Robert answered for me that the omission of such and such things would be much preferred by me, and accordingly the article appears in the 'Revue' with the passage from your book garbled and curtailed as seemed best to the quoter. Then Robert set about pro-

curing the 'Athenæum' in question. He tells me (and *that* I perfectly believe) that, for the facts to be given at all, they could not possibly be given with greater delicacy; oh, and I will add for myself, that for them to be related by anyone during my life, I would rather have *you* to relate them than another. But why should they be related during my life? There was no need, no need. To show my nervous susceptibility in the length and breadth of it to you, I *could not* (when it came to the point) *bear to read* the passage extracted in the 'Athenæum,' notwithstanding my natural anxiety to see exactly what was done. I could not bear to do it. I made Robert read it aloud — with omissions — so that I know all your kindness. I feel it deeply; through tears of pain I feel it; and if, as I dare say you will, you think me very very foolish, do not on that account think me ungrateful. Ungrateful I never can be to you, my much loved and kindest friend.

I hear your book is considered one of your best productions, and I do not doubt that the opinion is just. Thank you for giving it to us, thank you.

I don't like to send you a letter from Paris without a word about your hero — 'handsome,' I fancy not, nor the imperial type. I have not seen his face distinctly. What do you think about the constitution? Will it work, do you fancy, now-a-days in France? The initiative of the laws, put out of the power of the legislative assembly, seems to me a stupidity; and the senators, in their fine dresses, make me wink a little. Also, I hear that the 'senatorial cardinals' don't please the peasants, who hate the priesthood as much as they hate the 'Cossacks.' On the other hand, Montalembert was certainly in bed the other day with vexation, because 'nobody could do anything with Louis Napoleon — he was obstinate;' 'nous nous en lavons les mains,' and that fact gives me hope that not too much indulgence is intended to the church. There's to be a ball at the Tuileries with 'court dresses,' which is 'un peu fort' for

a republic. By the way, rumour (with apparent authority justifying it) says, that a black woman opened her mouth and prophesied to him at Ham, 'he should be the head of the French nation, and be assassinated in a ball-room.' I was assured that he believes the prophecy firmly, 'being in all things too superstitious' and fatalistical.

I was interrupted in this letter yesterday. Meantime comes out the decree against the Orleans property, which I disapprove of altogether. It's the worst thing yet done, to my mind. Yet the Bourse stands fast, and the decree is likely enough to be popular with the ouvrier class. There are rumours of tremendously wild financial measures, only I believe in no rumours just now, and apparently the Bourse is as incredulous on this particular point. If I thought (as people say) that we are on the verge of a 'law' declaring the Roman Catholic religion the State religion, I should give him up at once; but this would be contrary to the traditions of the Empire, and I can't suppose it to be probable on any account.

Observe, I am no Napoleonist. I am simply a *democrat*, and hold that the majority of a nation has the right of choice upon the question of its own government, *even where it makes a mistake*. Therefore the outcry of the English newspapers is most disgusting to me. For the rest, one can hardly do strict justice, at this time of transition, to the ultimate situation of the country; we must really wait a little, till the wind and rain shall have ceased to dash so in one's eyes. The wits go on talking, though, all the same; and I heard a suggestion yesterday, that, for the effaced 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité,' should be written up, 'Infanterie, cavallerie, artillerie.' That's the last 'mot,' I believe. The salons are very noisy. A lady was ordered to her country seat the other day for exclaiming, 'Et il n'y a pas de Charlotte Corday.'

Forgive, with this dull letter, my other defects. Always

I am frank to you, saying what is in my heart; and there is always there, dearest Miss Mitford, a fruitful and grateful affection to you from your

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 15, [1852].

Thank you, thank you, my beloved friend. Yes; I do understand in my heart all your kindness. Yes, I do believe that on some points I am full of disease; and this has exposed me several times to shocks of pain in the ordinary intercourse of the world, which for bystanders were hard, I dare say, to make out. Once at the Baths of Lucca I was literally nearly struck down to the ground by a single word said in all kindness by a friend whom I had not seen for ten years. The blue sky reeled over me, and I caught at something, not to fall. Well, there is no use dwelling on this subject. I understand your affectionateness and tender consideration, I repeat, and thank you; and love you, which is better. Now, let us talk of reasonable things.

Béranger lives close to us, and Robert has seen him in his white hat wandering along the asphalte. I had a notion somehow that he was very old; but he is only elderly, not much indeed above sixty (which is the prime of life now-a-days), and he lives quietly and keeps out of scrapes poetical and political, and if Robert and I had but a little less modesty we are assured that we should find access to him easy. But we can't make up our minds to go to his door and introduce ourselves as vagrant minstrels, when he may probably not know our names. We never *could* follow the fashion of certain authors who send their books about without intimations of their being likely to be acceptable or not, of which practice poor Tennyson knows too much for his peace. If, indeed, a letter of introduction to Béranger were vouchsafed to us from any benign quarter, we should

both be delighted, but we must wait patiently for the influence of the stars. Meanwhile, we have at last sent our letter (Mazzini's) to George Sand, accompanied with a little note signed by both of us, though written by me, as seemed right, being the woman. We half despaired in doing this, for it is most difficult, it appears, to get at her, she having taken vows against seeing strangers in consequence of various annoyances and persecutions in and out of print, which it's the mere instinct of a woman to avoid. I can understand it perfectly. Also, she is in Paris for only a few days, and under a new name, to escape from the plague of her notoriety. People said to us: 'She will never see you; you have no chance, I am afraid.' But we determined to try. At last I pricked Robert up to the leap, for he was really inclined to sit in his chair and be proud a little. 'No,' said I, 'you *shan't* be proud, and I *won't* be proud, and we *will* see her. I won't die, if I can help it, without seeing George Sand.' So we gave our letter to a friend who was to give it to a friend, who was to place it in her hands, her abode being a mystery and the name she used unknown. The next day came by the post this answer:

Madame, — J'aurai l'honneur de vous recevoir dimanche prochain rue Racine 3. C'est le seul jour que je puisse passer chez moi, et encore je n'en suis pas absolument certaine. Mais j'y ferai tellement mon possible, que ma bonne étoile m'y aidera peut-être un peu.

Agréez mille remercîments de cœur, ainsi que Monsieur Browning, que j'espère voir avec vous, pour la sympathie que vous m'accordez.

GEORGE SAND.

Paris: 12 février, 52.

This is graceful and kind, is it not? And we are going to-morrow; I, rather at the risk of my life. But I shall roll myself up head and all in a thick shawl, and we shall go in

a close carriage, and I hope I shall be able to tell you about the result before shutting up this letter.

One of her objects in coming to Paris this time was to get a commutation of the sentence upon her friend Dufraisse, who was ordered to Cayenne. She had an interview accordingly with the President. He shook hands with her and granted her request, and in the course of conversation pointed to a great heap of 'Decrees' on the table, being hatched 'for the good of France.' I have heard scarcely anything of him, except from his professed enemies; and it is really a good deal the simple recoil from manifest falsehoods and gross exaggerations which has thrown me on the ground of his defenders. For the rest, it remains to be *proved*, I think, whether he is a mere ambitious man, or better — whether his personality or his country stands highest with him as an object. I thought and still think that a Washington might have dissolved the Assembly as he did, and appealed to the people. Which is not saying, however, that he is a Washington. We must wait, I think, to judge the man. Only it is right to bear in mind one fact, that, admitting the lawfulness of the *coup d'état*, you must not object to the dictatorship. And, admitting the temporary necessity of the dictatorship, it is absolute folly to expect under it the liberty and ease of a regular government.

What has saved him with me from the beginning was his appeal to the people, and what makes his government respectable in my eyes is the answer of the people to that appeal. Being a democrat, I dare to be so *consequently*. There never was a more legitimate chief of a State than Louis Napoleon is now — elected by seven millions and a half; and I do maintain that, ape or demi-god, to insult him where he is, is to insult the people who placed him there. As to the stupid outcry in England about forced votes, voters pricked forward by bayonets — why, nothing can be more stupid. Nobody not blinded by passion could maintain such a thing for a moment. No French-

man, however blinded by passion, has maintained it in my presence.

A very philosophically minded man (French) was talking of these things the other day — one of the most thoughtful, liberal men I ever knew of any country, and high and pure in his moral views — also (let me add) more *anglomane* in general than I am. He was talking of the English press. He said he 'did it justice for good and noble intentions' (more than I do!), 'but marvelled at its extraordinary ignorance. Those writers did not know the A B C of France. Then, as to Louis Napoleon, whether he was right or wrong, they erred in supposing him not to be in earnest with his constitution and other remedies for France. The fact was, he not only was in earnest — he was even *fanatical*.'

There is, of course, much to deplore in the present state of affairs — much that is very melancholy. The constitution is not a model one, and no prospect of even comparative liberty of the Press has been offered. At the same time, I hope still. As tranquillity is established, there will be certain modifications; this, indeed, has been intimated, and I think the Press will by degrees attain to its emancipation. Meanwhile, the 'Athenæum' and other English papers say wrongly that there is a censure established on books. There is a censure on pamphlets and newspapers — on *books*, no. Cormenin is said to have been the adviser of the Orleans confiscation. . . .

To John Kenyon

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 15, 1852.

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — Robert sends you his Shelley,[1] having a very few copies allowed to him to dispose of. I

[1] The (forged) *Letters of Shelley*, to which Mr. Browning wrote an introduction, dealing rather with Shelley in general than with the letters.

think you have Shelley's other letters, of which this volume is the supplement, and you will not be sorry to have Robert's preface thrown in, though he makes very light of it himself.

You never write a word to us, and so I don't mean to send you a letter to-day — only as few lines as I can drop in a sulky fit, repenting as I go on. As to politics, you know you have all put me in the corner because I stand up for universal suffrage, and am weak enough to fancy that seven millions and a half of Frenchmen have some right to an opinion on their own affairs. It's really fatal in this world to be consequent — it leads one into damnable errors. So I shall not say much more at present. You must bear with me — dear Miss Bayley and all of you — and believe of me, if I am ever so wrong, that I do at least pray from my soul, 'May the right prevail!' — loving right, truth, justice, and the people through whatever mistakes. As it was in the beginning, from 'Casa Guidi Windows,' so it is now from the Avenue des Champs-Elysées. I am most humanly liable, of course, to make mistakes, and am by temperament perhaps over hopeful and sanguine. But I do see with my own eyes and feel with my own spirit, and not with other people's eyes and spirits, though they should happen to be the dearest — and that's the very best of me, be certain, so don't quarrel with it too much.

As to the worst of the President, let him have vulture's beak, hyena's teeth, and the rattle of the great serpent, it's nothing to the question. Let him be Caligula's horse raised to the consulship — what then? I am not a Buonapartist; I am simply a 'democrat,' as you say. I simply hold to the fact that, such as he is, the people chose him, and to the opinion that they have a right to choose whom they please. When your English Press denies the *fact of the choice* (a fact which the most passionate of partymen does not think of denying here), *I* seem to have a right to another opinion which might strike you as unpatriotic if I uttered it in this place. *Hic tacet*, then, rather than *jacet*.

For the rest, for heaven's sake and the truth's, do let us try to take breath a little and be patient. Let us wait till the dust of the struggle clears away before we take measures of the circus. We can't have the liberty of a regular government under a dictatorship. And if the 'constitution' which is coming is not model, it may wear itself into shape by being worked calmly. These new boots will be easier to the feet after half an hour's walking. Not that I like the pinching meanwhile. Not that stringencies upon the Press please *me* — no, nor arrests and imprisonments. I like these things, God knows, as little as the loudest curser of you all, but I don't think it necessary and lawful to exaggerate and over-colour, nor to paint the cheeks of sorrows into horrors, nor to talk, like the 'Quarterly Review' (betwixt excuses for the King of Naples), of two thousand four hundred persons being cut to mincemeat in the streets of Paris, nor to call boldness hypocrisy (because hypocrisy is the worse word), and the appeal to the sovereignty of the people usurpation, and universal suffrage the pricking of bayonets. Above all, I would avoid insulting the whole French nation, who have judged their own position and acted accordingly. If Louis Napoleon disappoints their expectation, he won't sit long where he is. Of that I feel satisfactory assurance; and, considering the national habits of insurrection, I really think that others may.

Meanwhile it is just to tell you that the two deepest-minded persons whom we have known in Paris — one an ultra-Republican of European reputation (I don't like mentioning names), and the other a Constitutionalist of the purest and noblest moral nature — are both inclined to take favorable views of the President's personal character and intentions. For my part, I don't pretend to an opinion. He may be, as they say, '*bon enfant*,' '*homme de conscience*,' and 'so much in earnest as to be fanatical,' or he may be a wretch and a reptile, as you say in England. That's nothing to the question as I see it. I don't take it up by

that handle at all. Caligula's horse or the people's 'Messiah,' as I heard him called the other day — what then? You are wonderfully intolerant, you in England, of equine consulships, you who bear with quite sufficient equanimity a great rampancy of beasts all over the world — Mr. Forster not blowing the trumpet of war, and Mrs. Alfred Tennyson not loading the rifles.

There now — I've done with politics to-day. Only just let me tell you that Cormenin is said to be the adviser in the matter of the Orleans decrees. So much the worse for him.

Whom do you think I saw yesterday? George Sand. Oh, I have been in such fear about it! It's the most difficult thing to get access to her, and, notwithstanding our letter from Mazzini, we were assured on all sides that she would not see us. She has been persecuted by book-makers — run to ground by the race, and, after having quite lost her on her former visit to Paris, it was in half despair that we seized on an opportunity of committing our letter of introduction to a friend of a friend of hers, who promised to put it into her own hands. With the letter I wrote a little note — I writing, as I was the woman, and both of us signing it. To my delight, we had an answer by the next day's post, gracious and graceful, desiring us to call on her last Sunday.

So we went. Robert let me at last, though I had a struggle for even that, the air being rather over-sharp for me. But I represented to him that one might as well lose one's life as one's peace of mind for ever, and if I lost seeing her I should with difficulty get over it. So I put on my respirator, smothered myself with furs, and, in a close carriage, did not run much risk after all.

She received us very kindly, with hand stretched out, which I, with a natural emotion (I assure you my heart beat), stooped and kissed, when she said quickly, 'Mais non, je ne veux pas,' and kissed my lips. She is somewhat

large for her height — not tall — and was dressed with great nicety in a sort of grey serge gown and jacket, made after the ruling fashion just now, and fastened up to the throat, plain linen collarette and sleeves. Her hair was uncovered, divided on the forehead in black, glossy bandeaux, and twisted up behind. The eyes and brow are noble, and the nose is of a somewhat Jewish character; the chin a little recedes, and the mouth is not good, though mobile, flashing out a sudden smile with its white projecting teeth. There is no sweetness in the face, but great moral as well as intellectual capacities — only it never *could* have been a beautiful face, which a good deal surprised me. The chief difference in it since it was younger is probably that the cheeks are considerably fuller than they used to be, but this of course does not alter the type. Her complexion is of a deep olive. I observed that her hands were small and well-shaped. We sate with her perhaps three-quarters of an hour or more — in which time she gave advice and various directions to two or three young men who were there, showing her confidence in us by the freest use of names and allusion to facts. She seemed to be, in fact, *the man* in that company, and the profound respect with which she was listened to a good deal impressed me. You are aware from the newspapers that she came to Paris for the purpose of seeing the President in behalf of certain of her friends, and that it was a successful mediation. What is peculiar in her manners and conversation is the absolute simplicity of both. Her voice is low and rapid, without emphasis or variety of modulation. Except one brilliant smile, she was grave — indeed, she was speaking of grave matters, and many of her friends are in adversity. But you could not help seeing (both Robert and I saw it) that in all she said, even in her kindness and pity, there was an under-current of scorn. A scorn of pleasing she evidently had; there never could have been a colour of coquetry in that woman. Her very freedom from affectation and consciousness

had a touch of disdain. But I liked her. I did not love her, but I felt the burning soul through all that quietness, and was not disappointed in George Sand. When we rose to go I could not help saying, 'C'est pour la dernière fois,' and then she asked us to repeat our visit next Sunday, and excused herself from coming to see us on the ground of a great press of engagements. She kissed me again when we went away, and Robert kissed her hand.

Lady Elgin has offered to take him one day this week to visit Lamartine (who, we hear, will be glad to see us, having a cordial feeling towards England and English poets), but I shall wait for some very warm day for that visit, not meaning to run mortal risks, except for George Sand. *Nota bene.* We didn't see her smoke.

Robert has ventured to send to your house, my dearest friend, two copies of 'Shelley' besides yours — one for Mr. Procter, and one for Mrs. Jameson, with kindest love, both. There is no hurry about either, you know. We wanted another for dear Miss Bayley, but we have only six copies, and don't keep one for ourselves, and she won't care, I dare say.

Your ever most affectionate and grateful

Ba.

Will you let your servant put this letter into the post for Miss Mitford? She upset me by her book, but had the most affectionate intentions, and I am obliged to her for what she meant. Then I am morbid, I know.

Tell dearest Miss Bayley, with my love, I shall write to her soon.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
February 26, [1852].

Never believe of me so bad a thing as that I could have received from you, my ever dear and very dear friend, such a letter as you describe, and rung hollow in return. I did

not get your letter, so how could I send an answer? Your letter's lost, like some other happy things. But I thank you for it fervently, guessing from what you say the sympathy and affection of it. I thank you for it most gratefully.

As for poor dear Miss Mitford's book, I was entirely upset by the biography she thought it necessary or expedient to give of me. Oh, if our friends would but put off anatomising one till after one was safely dead, and call to mind that, previously, we have nerves to be agonised and morbid brains to be driven mad! I am morbid, I know. I can't bear some words even from Robert. Like the lady who lay in the grave, and was ever after of the colour of a shroud, so I am white-souled, the past has left its mark with me for ever. And now (this is the worst) every newspaper critic who talks of my poems may refer to other things. I shall not feel myself safe a moment from references which stab like a knife.

But poor dear Miss Mitford, if we don't forgive what's meant as kindness, how are we to forgive what's meant as injury? In my first agitation I felt it as a real vexation that I couldn't be angry with her. How could I, poor thing? She has always loved me, and been so anxious to please me, and this time she seriously thought that Robert and I would be delighted. Extraordinary defect of comprehension!

Still, I did not, I could not, conceal from her that she had given me great pain, and she replied in a tone which really made me almost feel ungrateful for being pained, she said 'rather that her whole book had perished than have given me a moment's pain.' How are you to feel after *that?*

For the rest, it appears that she had merely come forward to the rescue of my reputation, no more than so. Sundry romantic tales had been in circulation about me. I was 'in widow's weeds' in my habitual costume — and, in fact, before I was married I had grievously scandalised the

English public (the imaginative part of the public), and it was expedient to 'tirer de l'autre côté.'

Well, I might have laughed at *that* — but I didn't. I wrote a very affectionate letter, for I really love Miss Mitford, though she understands me no more under certain respects than you in England understand Louis Napoleon and the French nation. Love's love. She meant the best to me — and so, do you, who have a much more penetrating sense of delicacy, forgive her for my sake, dear friend. . . .

Of the memoirs of Madame Ossoli, I know only the extracts in the 'Athenæum.' She was a most interesting woman to me, though I did not sympathise with a large portion of her opinions. Her written works are just *naught.* She said herself they were sketches, thrown out in haste and for the means of subsistence, and that the sole production of hers which was likely to represent her at all would be the history of the Italian Revolution. In fact, her reputation, such as it was in America, seemed to stand mainly on her conversation and oral lectures. If I wished anyone to do her justice, I should say, as I have indeed said, 'Never read what she has written.' The letters, however, are individual, and full, I should fancy, of that magnetic personal influence which was so strong in her. I felt drawn in towards her, during our short intercourse; I loved her, and the circumstances of her death shook me to the very roots of my heart. The comfort is, that she lost little in this world — the change could not be loss to her. She had suffered, and was likely to suffer still more.

And now, am I to tell you that I have seen George Sand twice, and am to see her again? Ah, there is no time to tell you, for I must shut up this letter. She sate, like a priestess, the other morning in a circle of eight or nine men, giving no oracles, except with her splendid eyes, sitting at the corner of the fire, and warming her feet quietly, in a general silence of the most profound deference. There was something in the calm disdain of it which pleased me, and

struck me as characteristic. She was George Sand, that was enough: you wanted no proof of it. Robert observed that 'if any other mistress of a house had behaved so, he would have walked out of the room' — but, as it was, no sort of incivility was meant. In fact, we hear that she 'likes us very much,' and as we went away she called me 'chère Madame' and kissed me, and desired to see us both again.

I did not read myself the passage in question from Miss M.'s book. I couldn't make up my mind, my courage, to look at it. But I understood from Robert.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
February 27, [1852].

I get your second letter, my dearest Mrs. Martin, before I answer your first, which makes me rather ashamed.

. . . Dearest friend, it is true that I have seldom been so upset as by this act of poor dear Miss Mitford's, and the very impossibility of being vindictive on this occasion increased my agitation at the moment. . . .

There are defects in delicacy and apprehensiveness, one cannot deny it, and yet I assure you that a more generous and fervent woman never lived than dear Miss Mitford is, and if you knew her you would do her this justice. She is better in herself than in her books — more large, more energetic, more human altogether. I think I understand her better on the whole than she understands me (which is not saying much), and I admire her on various accounts. She talks better, for instance, than most writers, male or female, whom I have had any intercourse with. And affectionate in the extreme, she has always been to me.

So I have mystified you and disgusted you with my politics, and my friends in England have put me in the corner; just so. . . .

The French nation is very peculiar. We choose to

boast ourselves of being different in England, but we have simply *les qualités de nos défauts* after all. The clash of speculative opinions is dreadful here, practical men catch at the ideal as if it were a loaf of bread, and they literally set about cutting out their Romeos 'into little stars,' as if that were the most natural thing in the world. As for the socialists, I quite agree with you that various of them, yes, and some of their chief men, are full of pure and noble aspiration, the most virtuous of men and the most benevolent. Still, they hold in their hands, in their clean hands, ideas that kill, ideas which defile, ideas which, if carried out, would be the worst and most crushing kind of despotism. I would rather live under the feet of the Czar than in those states of perfectibility imagined by Fourier and Cabet, if I might choose my 'pis aller.' All these speculators (even Louis Blanc, who is one of the most rational) would revolutionalise, not merely countries, but the elemental conditions of humanity, it seems to me; none of them seeing that antagonism is necessary to all progress. A man, in walking, must set one foot before another, and in climbing (as Dante observed long ago) the foot behind 'è sempre il più basso.' Only the gods (Plato tells us) keep both feet joined together in moving onward. It is not so, and cannot be so, with men.

But I think that not only in relation to the socialists, but to the monarchies, is L. N. the choice of the French people. I think that they will not *bear* the monarchies, they will not have either of them, they put them away. It seems to me that the French people is essentially democratical, and that by the vote in question they never meant to give away either rights or liberties. The extraordinary part of the actual position is that the Government, with these ugly signs of despotism in its face, stands upon the democracy (is no 'military despotism,' therefore, in any sense, as the English choose to say), and may be thrown, and will be thrown, on that day when it disappoints the popular

expectation. For my part, I am hopeful both for this reason and for others. I hope we shall do better, when there is greater calm; that presently there will be relaxation where there is stringency, and room to breathe and speak. At present it is a dictatorship, and we can't expect at such a time the ease and liberty of a regular government. The constitution itself may be modified, as the very terms of it imply, and the laws of the Press not carried out. Even as it is, all the English papers, infamous in their abuse of the Government (because of their falsifications and exaggerations properly called infamous) and highly immoral in their tone towards France generally, come in as usual, without an official finger being lifted up to hinder them. Louis Philippe would not admit Punch, you remember, on account of a few personal sarcasms. . . .

So much there is to say, and the post going. Can you read as I write on at a full gallop? Don't be out of heart. Do let us trust France — not L. Napoleon, but *France*. . . .

Dearest friends, think of me as your

Ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
April 7, 1852.

What a time seems to have passed since I wrote to you, my ever loved friend. Again and again I have been on the point of writing, and something has stopped me always. I have wished to wait till I had more about this and that to gossip of, and so the time went on. Now I am getting impatient to have news of you, and to learn whether the lovely spring has brought you any good yet as to health and strength. Don't take vengeance on my silence, but write, write. . . .

Yes, I want to see Béranger, and so does Robert. George Sand we came to know a great deal more of. I

think Robert saw her six times. Once he met her near the Tuileries, offered her his arm, and walked with her the whole length of the gardens. She was not on that occasion looking as well as usual, being a little too much 'endimanchée' in terrestrial lavenders and supercelestial blues — not, in fact, dressed with the remarkable taste which he has seen in her at other times. Her usual costume is both pretty and quiet, and the fashionable waistcoat and jacket (which are a spectacle in all the 'Ladies' Companions' of the day) make the only approach to masculine *wearings* to be observed in her. She has great nicety and refinement in her personal ways, I think, and the cigarette is really a feminine weapon if properly understood. Ah, but I didn't see her smoke. I was unfortunate. I could only go with Robert three times to her house, and once she was out. He was really very good and kind to let me go at all, after he found the sort of society rampant around her. He didn't like it extremely, but, being the prince of husbands, he was lenient to my desires and yielded the point. She seems to live in the abomination of desolation, as far as regards society — crowds of ill-bred men who adore her *à genoux bas*, betwixt a puff of smoke and an ejection of saliva. Society of the ragged Red diluted with the lower theatrical. She herself so different, so apart, as alone in her melancholy disdain! I was deeply interested in that poor woman, I felt a profound compassion for her. I did not mind much the Greek in Greek costume who tutoyéd her, and kissed her, I believe, so Robert said; or the other vulgar man of the theatre who went down on his knees and called her 'sublime.' 'Caprice d'amitié,' said she, with her quiet, gentle scorn. A noble woman under the mud, be certain. *I* would kneel down to her, too, if she would leave it all, throw it off, and be herself as God made her. But she would not care for my kneeling; she does not care for me. Perhaps she doesn't care for anybody by this time — who knows? She wrote one, or two, or three kind notes

to me, and promised to 'venir m'embrasser' before she left Paris; but she did not come. We both tried hard to please her, and she told a friend of ours that she 'liked us;' only we always felt that we couldn't penetrate — couldn't really *touch* her — it was all vain. Her play failed, though full of talent. It didn't draw, and was withdrawn accordingly. I wish she would keep to her romances, in which her real power lies.

We have found out Jadin, Alexandre Dumas' friend and companion in the '*Speronare*.' He showed Robert at his house poor Louis Philippe's famous 'umbrella,' and the Duke of Orleans' uniform, and the cup from which Napoleon took his coffee, which stood beside him as he signed the abdication. Then there was a picture of 'Milord' hanging up. I must go to see too. Said Robert: 'Then Alexandre Dumas doesn't write romances always.' (You know it was like a sudden spectacle of one of Leda's eggs.) 'Indeed,' replied Jadin, 'he wrote the true history of his own travels, only, of course, seeing everything, like a poet, from his own point of view.' Alfred De Musset was to have been at M. Buloz's, where Robert was a week ago, on purpose to meet him, but he was prevented in some way. His brother Paul De Musset, a very different person, was there instead — but we hope to have Alfred on another occasion. Do you know his poems? He is not capable of large grasps, but he has poet's life and blood in him, I assure you. He is said to be at the feet of Rachel just now, and a man may nearly as well be with a tigress in a cage. He began with the Princess Belgiojoso — followed George Sand — Rachel finishes, is likely to 'finish' in every sense. In the intervals, he plays at chess. There's the anatomy of a *man!*

We are expecting a visit from Lamartine, who does a great deal of honour to both of us, it appears, in the way of appreciation, and is kind enough to propose to come. I will tell you all about it.

But now tell *me*. Oh, I want so to hear how you are. Better, stronger, I hope and trust. How does the new house and garden look in the spring? Prettier and prettier, I dare say. . . .

The dotation of the President is enormous certainly, and I wish for his own sake it had been rather more moderate. Now I must end here. Post hour strikes. God bless you.

Do love me as much as you can, always, and think how I am your ever affectionate

Ba.

Our darling is well; thank God.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
April 12, Monday, 1852.

Your letter was pleasant and not so pleasant, dearest Monna Nina; for it was not so pleasant indeed to hear how ill you had been — and yet to be lifted into the hope, or rather certainty, of seeing you next week pleased us extremely of course, and the more that your note through Lady Lyell had thrown us backward into a slough of despond and made me sceptical as to your coming here at all. . . .

What a beautiful Paris it is! I walked out a little yesterday with Robert, and we both felt penetrated with the sentiment of southern life as we watched men, women, and children sitting out in the sun, taking wine and coffee, and enjoying their *fête* day with good happy faces. The mixture of classes is to me one of the most delicious features of the South, and you have it here exactly as in Italy. The colouring too, the brightness, even the sun — oh, come and enjoy it all with us. We have had a most splendid spring, beginning with February. Still, I have been out very seldom, being afraid of treacherous winds combined with burning sunshine, but I have enjoyed the weather in the

house and by opening the windows, and had been revived and strengthened much by it, and shall soon recover my summer power of walking, I dare say. What do you think I did the other night? Went to the Vaudeville to see the 'Dame aux Camélias' on above the fiftieth night of the representation. I disagree with the common outcry about its immorality. According to my view, it is moral and human. But I never will go to see it again, for it almost broke my heart and split my head. I had a headache afterwards for twenty-four hours. Even Robert, who gives himself out for *blasé* on dramatic matters, couldn't keep the tears from rolling down his cheeks. The exquisite acting, the too literal truth to nature everywhere, was *exasperating* — there was something profane in such familiar handling of life and death. Art has no business with real graveclothes when she wants tragic drapery — has she? It was too much altogether like a bull fight. There's a caricature at the shop windows of the effect produced, the pit protecting itself with multitudinous umbrellas from the tears of the boxes. This play is by Alexandre Dumas *fils* — and is worthy by its talent of Alexandre Dumas *père*.

Only that once have I been in a Parisian theatre. I couldn't go even to see 'Les Vacances de Pandolphe' when George Sand had the goodness to send us tickets for the first night. She failed in it, I am sorry to say — it did not 'draw,' as the phrase is. Now she has left Paris, but is likely to return.

I am sure it will do you great good to have change and liberty and distraction in various ways. The 'anxiety' you speak of — oh, I do hope it does not relate to Gerardine. I always think of her when you seem anxious.

I shall be very glad if, when you come, you should be inclined to give your attention, you with your honest and vigorous mind, to the facts of the political situation, not the facts as you hear them from the English, or from our friend Ma^dme^ Mohl, who confessed to me one day that

she liked exaggerations because she hated the President. She is a clever shrewd woman, but most eminently and on all subjects a woman; her passions having her thoughts inside them, instead of her thoughts her passions. That's the common distinction between women and men, is it not?

Robert, too, will tell you that he hates all Buonapartes, past, present, or to come, but then *he* says *that* in his self-willed, pettish way, as a manner of dismissing a subject he won't think about — and knowing very well that he doesn't think about it, not mistaking a feeling for a reason, not for a moment. There's the difference between women and men.

Well, but you won't come here to knit your brows about politics, but rather to forget all sorts of anxieties and distresses, and be well and happy, I do hope. You deserve a holiday after all that work. God bless you, dear friend.

Our united love goes to you and stays with you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Miss Mulock

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
April 27, [1852].

I am afraid you must think me — what can you have thought of me for not immediately answering a letter which brought the tears both to my eyes and my husband's? I was going to write just *so*, but he said: 'No, do not write yet; wait till we get the book and then you can speak of it with knowledge.' And I waited.

But the misfortune is that Messrs. Chapman & Hall waited too, and that up to the present time 'The Head of the Family' has not arrived. Mr. Chapman is slow in finding what he calls his opportunities.

Therefore I can't wait any more, no indeed. The voice which called 'Dinah' in the garden — which was true, because certainly I did call from Florence with my whole heart to the writer of these verses[1] (how deeply they moved me!) — will have seemed to you by this time as fabulous as the garden itself. And we had no garden at Florence, I must confess to you, only a terrace facing the grey wall of San Felice church, where we used to walk up and down on the moonlight nights. But San Felice was always a good saint to me, and when I had read and cried over those verses from the 'Athenæum' (my husband wrote them out for me at the reading room) and when I had vainly written to England to find out the poet, and when I had all as vainly, on our visit to England last summer, inquired of this person and that person, it turns out after all that 'Dinah' answers me. Do you not think I am glad?

The beautiful verses touched me to the quick, so does your letter. We shall be in London again perhaps in two months for a few weeks, and then you will let us see you, I hope, will you not? And, in the meanwhile, you will believe that we do not indeed think of you as a stranger. Ah, your dream flattered me in certain respects! Yet there was some truth in it, as I have told you, even though you saw in the dreamlight more roses than were growing.

Certainly Mr. Chapman will at last send me 'The Head of the Family,' and then I will write again of course.

Dear Miss Mulock, may I write myself down now, because I *must*.

Affectionately yours and gratefully,
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[1] 'Lines to Elizabeth Barrett Browning on her Later Sonnets,' printed in the *Athenæum* for February 15, 1851. The allusion to the voice which called 'Dinah' must refer to something in Miss Mulock's letter. Dinah was Miss Mulock's Christian name.

To Miss Mitford

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Ch.-Elysées:
May 9, [1852].

I began a long letter to you in the impulse left by yours upon me, and then destroyed it by accident. That hindered me from writing as soon as I should have done, for indeed I am anxious to have other news of you, my dearest dear Miss Mitford, and to know, if possible, that you are a little better. . . . Tell me everything. Why, you looked really well last summer; and I want to see you looking well this summer, for we shall probably be in London in June — more's the pity, perhaps! The gladness I have in England is so leavened through and through with sadness that I incline to do with it as one does with the black bread of the monks of Vallombrosa, only pretend to eat it and drop it slyly under the table. If it were not for some ties I would say 'Farewell, England,' and never set foot on it again. There's always an east wind for *me* in England, whether the sun shines or not — the moral east wind which is colder than any other. But how dull to go on talking of the weather: *Sia come vuole*, as we say in Italy.

To-morrow is the great *fête* of your Louis Napoleon, the distribution of the eagles. We have done our possible and impossible to get tickets, because I had taken strongly into my head to want to go, and because Robert, who didn't care for it himself, cared for it for me; but here's the eleventh hour and our prospects remain gloomy. We did not apply sufficiently soon, I am afraid, and the name of the applicants have been legion. It will be a grand sight, and full of significances. Nevertheless, the empire won't come *so;* you will have to wait a little for the empire. Who were your financial authorities who praised Louis Napoleon? and do the same approve of the late measure about the three per cents.? I am so absolutely *bête* upon such subjects that I

don't even *pretend* to be intelligent; but I heard yesterday from a direct source that Rothschild expressed a high admiration of the President's financial ability. A friend of that master in Israel said it to our friend Lady Elgin. Commerce is reviving, money is pouring in, confidence is being restored on all sides. Even the Press palpitates again — ah, but I wish it were a little freer of the corset. This Government is not after my heart after all. I only tolerate what appear to me the necessities of an exceptional situation. The masses are satisfied and hopeful, and the President stronger and stronger — not by the sword, may it please the English Press, but by the democracy.

I am delighted to see that the French Government has protested against the reactionary iniquities of the Tuscan Grand Duke, and every day I expect eagerly some helping hand to be stretched out to Rome. I have looked for this from the very first, and certainly it is significant that the prince of Canino, the late President of the Roman republic, should be in favour at the Elysée. Pio Nono's time is but short, I fancy — that is, reforms will be forced upon him.

When George Sand had audience with the President, he was very kind; did I tell you that? At the last he said: 'Vous verrez, vous serez contente de moi.' To which she answered, 'Et vous, vous serez content de moi.' It was repeated to me as to the great dishonour of Madame Sand, and as a proof that she could not resist the influence of power and was a bad republican. I, on the contrary, thought the story quite honourable to both parties. It was for the sake of her *rouge* friends that she approached the President at all, and she has used the hand he stretched out to her only on behalf of persons in prison and distress. The same, being delivered, call her gratefully a recreant.

Victor Cousin and Villemain refuse to take the oath, and lose their situations in the Academy accordingly; but they retire on pensions, and it's their own fault of course.

Michelet and Quinet should have an equivalent, I think, for what they have lost; they are worthy, as poets, orators, dreamers, speculative thinkers — as anything, in fact, but instructors of youth.

No, there is a brochure, or a little book somewhere, pretending to be a memoir of Balzac, but I have not seen it. Some time before his death he had bought a country place, and there was a fruit tree in the garden — I think a walnut tree — about which he delighted himself in making various financial calculations after the manner of César Birotteau. He built the house himself, and when it was finished there was just one defect — it wanted a staircase. They had to put in the staircase afterwards. The picture gallery, however, had been seen to from the first, and the great writer had chalked on the walls, 'Mon Raffaelle,' 'Mon Corregge,' 'Mon Titien,' 'Mon Leonarde de Vince,' the pictures being yet unattained. He is said to have been a little loth to spend money, and to have liked to dine magnificently at the restaurant at the expense of his friends, forgetting to pay for his own share of the entertainment. For the rest, the 'idée fixe' of the man was to be rich one day, and he threw his subtle imagination and vital poetry into pounds, shillings, and pence with such force that he worked the base element into spiritual splendours. Oh! to think of our having missed seeing that man. It is painful. A little book is published of his 'thoughts and maxims,' the sweepings of his desk I suppose; broken notes, probably, which would have been wrought up into some noble works, if he had lived. Some of these are very striking.

Lamartine has not yet paid us the promised visit. Just as we were beginning to feel vexed we heard that the intermediate friend who was to have brought him had been caught up by the Government and sent off to Saint-Germain to 'faire le mort,' on pain of being sent farther. I mean Eugène Belleton. If he talked in many places as he talked

in this room, I can't be very much surprised, but I am really very sorry. He is one of those amiable domestic men who delight in talking 'battle, murder, and sudden death.'

[*The end of this letter is wanting.*]

To Miss Mulock

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
June 2, [1852].

My husband went directly to Rue Vivienne and came back without the book. We waited and waited, but at last it reached us, and we have read it, and since then I have let some days go by through having been unwell. You seemed to let me sit still in my chair and do nothing; you did not call too loud. So was it with most other things in the universe. Now, having awakened from my somnolency, recovered from 'La Grippe' (or what mortal Londoners call the influenza), the first person and first book I think of must naturally be you and yours.

So I thank you much, much, for the book. It has interested me, dear Miss Mulock, as a book should, and I am delighted to recognise everywhere undeniable talent and faculty, combined with high and pure aspiration. A clever book, a graceful book, and with the moral grace besides — thank you. Many must have thanked you as well as myself.

At the same time, precisely because I feel particularly obliged to you, I mean to tell you the truth. Your hero is heroic from his own point of view — accepting his own view of the situation, which I, for one, cannot accept, do you know, for I am of opinion that both you and he are rather conventional on the subject of his marriage. I don't in the least understand, at this moment, why he should not have married in the first volume; no, not in the least. It was a matter of income, he would tell me, and of keeping two establishments; and I would answer that it ought

rather to have been a matter of faith in God and in the value of God's gifts, the greatest of which is love. I am romantic about love — oh, much more than you are, though older than you. A man's life does not develop rightly without it, and what is called an 'improvident marriage' often appears to me a noble, righteous, and prudent act. Your Ninian was a man before he was a brother. I hold that he had no right to sacrifice a great spiritual good of his own to the worldly good of his family, however he made it out. He should have said: 'God gives me this gift, He will find me energy to work for it and suffer for it. We will all live together, struggle together if it is necessary, a little more poorly, a little more laboriously, but keeping true to the best aims of life, all of us.'

That's what *my* Ninian would have said. I don't like to see noble Ninians crushed flat under family Juggernauts, from whatever heroic motives — not I. Do you forgive me for being so candid?

I must tell you that Mrs. Jameson, who is staying in this house, read your book in England and mentioned it to me as a good book, 'very gracefully written,' before I read it, quite irrespectively, too, of my dedication, which was absent from the copy she saw at Brighton. It was mentioned as one of the novels which had pleased her most lately.

I shall like to show you my child, as you like children, and as I am vain — oh, past endurance vain, about him. You won't understand a word he says, though, for he speaks three languages at once, and most of the syllables of each wrong side foremost.

No, don't call me a Bonapartist. I am not a Bonapartist indeed. But I am a Democrat and singularly (in these days) consequent about universal suffrage. Also, facts in England have been much mis-stated; but there's no room for politics to-day.

When I thank you, remember that my husband thanks

you. We both hope to see you before this month shall be quite at an end, and then you will know me better, I hope; and though I shall lose a great deal by your knowing me, of course, yet you won't, *after that*, make such mistakes as you 'confess' in this note which I have just read over again. Did I think you 'sentimental'? Won't you rather think *me* sentimental to-day? Through it all,

Your affectionate

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris,] 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
June 16, [1852].

My first word must be to thank you, my dearest kind friend, for your affectionate words to me and mine, which always, from you, sink deeply. It was, on my part, great gratification to see you and talk to you and hear you talk, and, above all, perhaps, to feel that you loved me still a little. May God bless you both! And may we meet again and again in Paris and elsewhere; in London this summer to begin with! As the Italians would say in relation to any like pleasure: 'Sarebbe una *benedizione*.'

We are waiting for the English weather to be reported endurable in order to set out. Mrs. Streatfield, who has been in England these twelve days, writes to certify that it is past the force of a Parisian imagination to imagine the state of the skies and the atmosphere; yet, even in Paris, we have been moaning the last four days, because really, since then, we have gone back to April, and a rather cool April, with alternate showers and sunshine — a crisis, however, which does not call for fires, nor inflict much harm on me. It was the thunder, we think, that upset the summer.

You seem to have had a sort of inkling about my brittleness when you were here. It was the beginning of a bad attack of cough and pain in the side, the consequence of

which was that I turned suddenly into the likeness of a ghost and frightened Robert from his design of going to England. About that I am by no means regretful; he was not wanted, as the event proved abundantly. The worst was that he was annoyed by the number of judicious observers and miserable comforters who told him I was horribly changed and ought to be taken back to Italy forthwith. I knew it was nothing but an accidental attack, and that the results would pass away, as they did. I kept quiet, applied mustard poultices, and am now looking again (tell dear Mr. Martin) 'as if I had shammed.' So all these misfortunes are strictly historical, you are to understand. To-night we are going to Ary Scheffer's to hear music and to see ever so many celebrities. Oh, and let me remember to tell you that M. Thierry, the blind historian, has sent us a message by his physician to ask us to go to see him, and as a matter of course we go. Madame Viardot, the prima donna, and Leonard, the first violin player at the Conservatoire, are to be at M. Scheffer's.

After all, you are too right. The less amused I am, clearly the better for me. I should live ever so many years more by being shut up in a hermitage, if it were warm and dry. More's the pity, when one wants to see and hear as I do. The only sort of excitement and fatigue which does me no harm, but good, is *travelling*. The effect of the continual change of air is to pour in oil as the lamp burns; so I explain the extraordinary manner in which I bear the fatigue of being four-and-twenty hours together in a diligence, for instance, which many strong women would feel too much for them.

All this talking of myself when I want to talk of you and to tell you how touched I was by the praises of your winning little Letitia! Enclosed is a note to Chapman & Hall which will put her 'bearer' (if she can find one in London) in possession of the two volumes in question. I shall like her to have them, and she must try to find my

love, as the King of France did the poison (a 'most unsavoury simile,' certainly), between the leaves. I send with them, in any case, my best love. Ah, so sorry I am that she has suffered from the weather you have had. She is a most interesting child, and of a nature which is rare. . . .

Robert's warm regards, with those of your

Ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Madame Viardot is George Sand's heroine Consuelo. You know that beautiful book.

With the last days of June the long stay in Paris came to an end, and the Brownings paid their second visit to London. Their residence on this occasion was at 58 Welbeck Street ('very respectable rooms this time, and at a moderate price'), and here they stayed until the beginning of November. Neither husband nor wife seems to have written much poetry during this year, either in Paris or in London.

To Miss Mitford

[London,] 58 Welbeck Street: Saturday, [June–July 1852].

. . . . We saw your book in Paris, the Galignani edition, and I read it all except the one thing I had not courage to read. Thank you, thank you. We are both of us grateful to you for your most generous and heartwarm intentions to us. As to the book, it's a book made to go east and west; it's a popular book with flowers from the 'village' laid freshly and brightly between the critical leaves. I don't always agree with you. I think, for instance, that Mary Anne Browne should never be compared to George Sand in 'passion,' and I can't grant to you that your extracts from her poems bear you out to even one fiftieth degree in such an opinion. I agree with you just as

little with regard to Dr. Holmes and certain others. But to *have* your opinion is always a delightful thing, and 'it is characteristic of your generosity,' to say the least, we say to ourselves when we are 'dissidents' most.

I am writing in the extremest haste, just a word to announce our arrival in England. We are in very comfortable rooms in 58 Welbeck Street, and my sister Henrietta is some twenty doors away. To-morrow Robert and I are going to Wimbledon for a day to dear Mr. Kenyon, who looks radiantly well and has Mr. Landor for a companion just now. Imagine the uproar and turmoil of our first days in London, and believe that I think of you faithfully and tenderly through all. I am overjoyed to see my sisters, who look well on the whole . . . and they and everybody assure me that I show a very satisfactory face to my country, as far as improved looks go.

What nonsense one writes when one has but a moment to write in. I find people talking about the 'facts in the "Times"' touching Louis Napoleon. Facts in the 'Times'!

The heat is *stifling*. Do send one word to say how you are, and love me always as I love you.

Your most affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street: Friday, July 31, 1852 [postmark].

I want to hear about you again, dear, dearest Miss Mitford, and I can't hear. Will you send me a line or a word. . . . I mean to go down to see you one day, but certainly we must account it right not to tire you while you are weak, and not to spoil our enjoyment by forestalling it. Two months are full of days; we can afford to wait. Meantime let us have a little gossip such as the gods allow of.

Dear Mr. Kenyon has not yet gone to Scotland, though his intentions still stand north. He passed an evening with us some evenings ago, and was brilliant and charming (the

two things together), and good and affectionate at the same time. Mr. Landor was staying with him (perhaps I told you that), and went away into Worcestershire, assuring me, when he took leave of me, that he would never enter London again. A week passes, and lo! Mr. Kenyon expects him again. Resolutions are not always irrevocable, you observe.

I must tell you what Landor said about Louis Napoleon. You are aware that he loathed the first Napoleon and that he hates the French nation; also, he detests the present state of French affairs, and has foamed over in the 'Examiner' 'in prose and rhyme' on that subject of them. Nevertheless, he who calls 'the Emperor' 'an infernal fool' expresses himself to this effect about the President: 'I always knew him to be a man of wonderful genius. I knew him intimately, and I was persuaded of what was in him. When people have said to me, "How can you like to waste your time with so trifling a man?" I have answered: "If all your Houses of Parliament, putting their heads together, could make a head equal to this trifling man's head it would be well for England."'

It was quite unexpected to me to hear Mr. Landor talk so.

He, Mr. Landor, is looking as young as ever, as full of life and passionate energy.

Did Mr. Horne write to you before he went to Australia? Did I speak to you about his going? Did you see the letter which he put into the papers as a farewell to England? I think of it all sadly.

Mazzini came to see us the other day, with that pale spiritual face of his, and those intense eyes full of melancholy illusions. I was thinking, while he sate there, on what Italian turf he would lie at last with a bullet in his heart, or perhaps with a knife in his back, for to one of those ends it will surely come. Mrs. Carlyle came with him. She is a great favorite of mine: full of thought, and feeling, and character, it seems to me.

London is emptying itself, and the relief will be great in a certain way; for one gets exhausted sometimes. Let me remember whom I have seen. Mrs. Newton Crosland, who spoke of you very warmly; Miss Mulock, who wrote 'The Ogilvies' (that series of novels), and is interesting, gentle, and young, and seems to have worked half her life in spite of youth; Mr. Field we have not seen, only heard of; Miss ——, no — but I am to see her, I understand, and that she is an American Corinna in yellow silk, but pretty. We drove out to Kensington with Monckton Milnes and his wife, and I like her; she is quiet and kind, and seems to have accomplishments, and we are to meet Fanny Kemble at the Procters' some day next week. Many good faces, but the best wanting. Ah, I wish Lord Stanhope, who shows the spirits of the sun in a crystal ball, could show us *that*.' Have you heard of the crystal ball?[1] We went to meet it and the seer the other morning, with sundry of the believers and unbelievers — among the latter, chief among the latter, Mr. Chorley, who was highly indignant and greatly scandalised, particularly on account of the combination sought to be established by the lady of the house between lobster salad and Oremus, spirit of the sun. For my part, I endured both luncheon and spiritual phenomena with great equanimity. It was very curious altogether to my mind, as a sign of the times, if in no other respect of philosophy. But I love the marvellous. Write a word to me, I beseech you, and love me and think of me, as I love and think of you. God bless you. Robert's love.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

[1] In another letter, written about the same date to Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Browning says: 'Perhaps you never heard of the crystal ball. The original ball was bought by Lady Blessington from an "Egyptian magician," and resold at her sale. She never could understand the use of it, but others have looked deeper, or with purer eyes, it is said; and now there is an optician in London who makes and sells these

To Mrs. Jameson

58 Welbeck Street: Tuesday, [July–October 1852].

Dearest Monna Nina, — Here are the verses. I did them all because that was easiest to me, but of course you will extract the two you want.

It has struck me besides that you might care to see this old ballad which I find among my papers from one of the Percy or other antiquarian Society books, and which I transcribed years ago, modernising slightly in order to make out some sort of rhythm as I went on. I did this because the original poem impressed me deeply with its pathos. I wish I could send you the antique literal poem, but I haven't it, nor know where to find it; still, I don't think I quite spoilt it with the very slight changes ventured by me in the transcription.

God bless you. Let us meet on Wednesday. Robert's best love, with that of your ever affectionate

BA.

STABAT MATER

Mother full of lamentation,
Near that cross she wept her passion,
  Whereon hung her child and Lord.
Through her spirit worn and wailing,
Tortured by the stroke and failing,
  Passed and pierced the prophet's sword.

Oh, sad, sore, above all other,
Was that ever blessed mother
  Of the sole-begotten one;
She who mourned and moaned and trembled
While she measured, nor dissembled,
  Such despairs of such a son!

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balls, and speaks of a "great demand," though they are expensive. "Many persons," said Lord Stanhope, "use the balls, without the moral courage to confess it." No doubt they did.

Where's the man could hold from weeping,
If Christ's mother he saw keeping
Watch with mother-heart undone?
Who could hold from grief, to view her,
Tender mother true and pure,
Agonising with her Son?

For her people's sins she saw Him
Down the bitter deep withdraw Him
'Neath the scourge and through the dole!
Her sweet Son she contemplated
Nailed to death, and desolated,
While He breathed away His soul.

E. B. B.

BALLAD — *Beginning of Edward II.'s Reign*

'Stand up, mother, under cross,
Smile to help thy Son at loss.
Blythe, O mother, try to be!'
'Son, how can I blythely stand,
Seeing here Thy foot and hand
Nailèd to the cruel tree?'

'Mother, cease thy weeping blind.
I die here for all mankind,
Not for guilt that I have done.'
'Son, I feel Thy deathly smart.
The sword pierces through my heart,
Prophesied by Simeon.'

'Mother, mercy! let me die,
Adam out of hell to buy,
And his kin who are accurst.'
'Son, what use have I for breath?
Sorrow wasteth me to death —
Let my dying come the first.'

'Mother, pity on thy Son!
Bloody tears be running down
Worse to bear than death to meet!'
'Son, how can I cease from weeping?
Bloody streams I see a-creeping
From Thine heart against my feet.'

'Mother, now I tell thee, I!
Better is it one should die
Than all men to hell should go.'
'Son, I see Thy body hang
Foot and hand in piercèd pang.
Who can wonder at my woe?'

'Mother, now I will thee tell,
If I live, thou goest to hell —
I must die here for thy sake.'
'Son, Thou art so mild and kind,
Nature, knowledge have enjoined
I, for Thee, this wail must make.'

'Mother, ponder now this thing:
Sorrow childbirth still must bring,
Sorrow 'tis to have a son!'
'Ay, still sorrow, I can tell!
Mete it by the pain of hell,
Since more sorrow can be none.'

'Mother, pity mother's care!
Now as mother dost thou fare,
Though of maids the purest known.'
'Son, Thou help at every need
All those who before me plead —
Maid, wife — woman, everyone.'

'Mother, here I cannot dwell.
Time is that I pass to hell,
And the third day rise again.'
'Son, I would depart with Thee.
Lo! Thy wounds are slaying me.
Death has no such sorrow — none.'

When He rose, then fell her sorrow.
Sprang her bliss on the third morrow.
A blythe mother wert thou so!
Lady, for that selfsame bliss,
Pray thy Son who peerless is,
Be our shield against our foe.

Blessed be thou, full of bliss!
Let us not heaven's safety miss,
Never! through thy sweet Son's might.
Jesus, for that selfsame blood
Which Thou sheddest upon rood,
Bring us to the heavenly light.

To Mrs. Martin

58 Welbeck Street: Thursday, [September 2, 1852].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Your letters always make me glad to see them, but this time the pleasure was tempered by an undeniable pain in the conscience. Oh, I ought to have written long and long ago. I have another letter of yours unanswered. Also, there was a proposition in it to Robert of a tempting character, and he put off the 'no' — the ungracious-sounding 'no' — as long as he could. He would have liked to have seen Mrs. Flood, as well as you; she is a favorite with us both. But he finds it impossible to leave London. We have had no less than eight invitations into the country, and we are forced to keep to London, in spite of all 'babbling about' and from 'green fields.' Once we went to Farnham, and spent two days with Mr. and Mrs. Paine there in that lovely heathy country, and met Mr. Kingsley, the 'Christian Socialist,' author of 'Alton Locke,' 'Yeast,' &c. It is only two hours from town (or less) by railroad, and we took our child with us and Flush, and had a breath of fresh air which ought to have done us good, but didn't. Few men have impressed me more agreeably than Mr. Kingsley. He is original and earnest, and full of a genial and almost tender kindliness which is delightful to me. Wild and theoretical in many ways he is of course, but I believe he could not be otherwise than good and noble, let him say or dream what he will. You are not to confound this visit of ours to Farnham with the 'sanitary reform' picnic (!) to the same place, at which the newspapers say we were present. We were *invited*

— that is true — but did not go, nor thought of it. I am not up to picnics — nor *down* to some of the company perhaps; who knows? Don't think me grown, too, suddenly scornful, without being sure of the particulars. . . .

Mr. Tennyson has a little son, and wrote me such three happy notes on the occasion that I really never liked him so well before. I do like men who are not ashamed to be happy beside a cradle. Monckton Milnes had a brilliant christening luncheon, and his baby was made to sweep in India muslin and Brussels lace among a very large circle of admiring guests. Think of my vanity turning my head completely and admitting of my taking Wiedeman there (because of an express invitation). He behaved like an angel, everybody said, and looked very pretty, I said myself; only he disgraced us all at last by refusing to kiss the baby, on the ground of his being 'troppo grande.' He has learnt quantities of English words, and is in consequence more unintelligible than ever. Poor darling! I am in pain about him to-day. Wilson goes to spend a fortnight with her mother, and I don't know how I shall be comforter enough. There will be great wailing and gnashing of teeth certainly, and I shall be in prison for the next two weeks, and have to do all the washing and dressing myself. . . .

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street:
Saturday, September 14, 1852 [postmark].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I am tied and bound beyond redemption for the next fortnight at least, therefore the hope of seeing you must be for *afterwards*. I dare say you think that a child can be stowed away like other goods; but I do assure you that my child, though quite capable of

being amused by his aunts for a certain number of half-hours, would break his little heart if I left him for a whole day while he had not Wilson. When she is here, he is contented. In her absence he is sceptical about happiness, and suspicious of complete desolation. Every now and then he says to me, 'Will mama' (saying it in his pretty, broken, unquotable language) 'go away and leave Peninni all alone?' He won't let a human being touch him. I wash and dress him, and have him to sleep with me, and Robert is the only other helper he will allow of. 'There's spoiling of a child!' say you. But he is so good and tender and sensitive that we can't go beyond a certain line. For instance, I was quite frightened about the effect of Wilson's leaving him. We managed to prepare him as well as we could, and when he found she was actually gone, the passion of grief I had feared was just escaped. He struggled with himself, the eyes full of tears, and the lips quivering, but there was not any screaming and crying such as made me cry last year on a like occasion. He had made up his mind.

You see I can't go to you just now, whatever temptations you hold out. Wait — oh, we must wait. And whenever I do go to you, you will see Robert at the same time. He will like to see *you;* and besides, he would as soon trust me to travel to Reading alone as *I* trust Peninni to be alone here. I believe he thinks I should drop off my head and leave it under the seat of the rail-carriage if he didn't take care of it. . . .

I ought to have told you that Mr. Kingsley (one of the reasons why I liked him) spoke warmly and admiringly of you. Yes, I ought to have told you that — his praise is worth having. Of course I have heard much of Mr. Harness from Mr. Kenyon and you, as well as from my own husband. But there is no use in measuring temptations; I am a female St. Anthony, and *won't* be overcome. The Talfourds wanted me to dine with them

on Monday. Robert goes alone. You don't mention Mr. Chorley. Didn't he find his way to you?

Mr. Patmore told us that Tennyson was writing a poem on Arthur — *not* an epic, a collection of poems, ballad and otherwise, united by the subject, after the manner of 'In Memoriam,' but in different measures. The work will be full of beauty, whatever it is, I don't doubt.

I am reading more Dumas. He never flags. I *must* see Dumas when I go again to Paris, and it will be easy, as we know his friend Jadin.

Did you read Mrs. Norton's last book — the novel, which seems to be so much praised? Tell me what it is, in your mind. . . .

I will write no more, that you may have the answer to my kind proposition as soon as possible. *After the fortnight.*

God bless you.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Mitford

58 Welbeck Street: Tuesday, [September 1852].

Alas, no; I cannot go to you before the Saturday you name, nor for some days after, dearest friend. It is simply impossible. Wilson has not come back, nor will till the end of next week, and though I can get away from my child for two or three hours at once during the daytime, for the whole day I could not go. What would become of him, poor darling? . . .

And I can't go to you this week, nor next week, probably. How vexatious! My comfort is that you seem to be better — much, much better — and that you have courage to think of the pony carriages and the Kingsleys of the earth. That man impressed me much, interested me much. The more you see of him, the more you will like him, is my prophecy. He has a volume of poems, I hear, close upon

publication, and Robert and I are looking forward to it eagerly.

Mr. Ruskin has been to see us (did I tell you that?). . . . We went to Denmark Hill yesterday by agreement to see the Turners — which, by the way, are divine. I like Mr. Ruskin much, and so does Robert. Very gentle, yet earnest — refined and truthful. I like him very much. We count him among the valuable acquaintances made this year in England. . . .

Mr. Kenyon has come back, and most other people are gone away; but he is worth more than most other people, so the advantage remains to the scale. I am delighted that you should have your dear friend Mr. Harness with you, and, for my own part, I do feel grateful to him for the good he has evidently done you. Oh, continue to be better! Don't overtire yourself — don't use improvidently the new strength. Remember the winter, and be wise; and let me see you, before it comes, looking as bright and well as I thought you last year. God bless you always.

Love your ever affectionate

Robert's love. Ba.

To Miss Mitford

London: Friday, [October 6, 1852].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I am quite in pain to have to write a farewell to you after all. As soon as Wilson had returned — and she stayed away much longer than last year — we found ourselves pushed to the edge of our time for remaining in England, and the accumulation of business to be done before we could go pressed on us. I am almost mad with the amount of things to be done, as it is; but I should have put the visit to you at the head of them, and swept all the rest on one side for a day, if it hadn't been for the detestable weather, and my horrible cough which combines with it. When Wilson came back she found me coughing in my old way, and it has been without inter-

mission up to now, or rather waxing worse and worse. To have gone down to you and inflicted the noise of it on you would have simply made you nervous, while the risk to myself would have been very great indeed. Still, I have waited and waited, feeling it scarcely possible to write to you to say, 'I am not coming this year.' Ah, I am so very sorry and disappointed! I hoped against hope for a break in the weather, and an improvement in myself; now we must go, and there is no hope. For about a fortnight I have been a prisoner in the house. This climate won't let me live, there's the truth. So we are going on Monday. We go to Paris for a week or two, and then to Florence, and then to Rome, and then to Naples; but we shall be back next year, if God pleases, and then I shall seize an early summer day to run down straight to you and find you stronger, if God blesses me so far. Think of me and love me a little meanwhile. I shall do it by you. And do, *do* — since there is no time to hear from you in London — send a fragment of a note to Arabel for me, that I may have it in Paris before we set out on our long Italian journey. Let me have the comfort of knowing exactly how you are before we set out. As for me, I expect to be better on crossing the Channel. How people manage to live and enjoy life in this fog and cold is inexplicable to me. I understand the system of the American rapping spirits considerably better. . . .

The Tennysons in their kindest words pressed us to be present at their child's christening, which took place last Tuesday, but I could not go; it was not possible. Robert went alone, therefore, and nursed the baby for ten or twelve minutes, to its obvious contentment, he flatters himself. It was christened Hallam Tennyson. Mr. Hallam was the godfather, and present in his vocation. That was touching, wasn't it? I hear that the Laureate talks vehemently against the French President and the French; but for the rest he is genial and good, and has been quite affectionate to us. . . .

So I go without seeing you. Grieved I am. Love me to make amends.

Robert's love goes with me.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

[Paris,] Hôtel de la Ville l'Évêque, Rue Ville l'Évêque:
Thursday, [November 1852].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — I cannot do better to-day than keep my promise to you about writing. We have done our business in Paris, but we linger from the inglorious reason that we, experienced travellers as we are, actually left a desk behind us in Bentinck Street, and must get it before we go farther. Meanwhile, it's rather dangerous to let the charm of Paris work — the honey will be clogging our feet very soon, and make it difficult to go away. What an attractive place this is, to be sure! How the sun shines, how the blue sky spreads, how the life lives, and how kind the people are on all sides! If we were going anywhere but to Italy, and if I were a little less plainly mortal with this disagreeable cough of mine, I would gladly stay and see in the Empire with M. Proudhon in the tail of it, and sit as a watcher over whatever things shall be this year and next spring at Paris. As it is, we have been very fortunate, as usual, in being present in a balcony on the boulevard, the best place possible for seeing the grandest spectacle in the world, the reception of Louis Napoleon last Saturday. The day was brilliant, and the sweep of sunshine over the streaming multitude, and all the military and civil pomp, made it difficult to distinguish between the light and life. The sunshine seemed literally to push back the houses to make room for the crowd, and the wide boulevards looked wider than ever. If you had cursed the sentiment of the day ever so, you would have had eyes for its picturesqueness, I think, so I wish you had been there to see. Louis

Napoleon showed his usual tact and courage by riding on horseback quite alone, at least ten paces between himself and his nearest escort, which of course had a striking effect, taking the French on their weak side, and startling even Miss Cushman (who had been murmuring displeasure into my ear for an hour) into an exclamation of 'That's fine, I must say.' Little Wiedeman was in a state of ecstasy, and has been recounting ever since how he called '"Vive Napoleon!" *molto molto duro*,' meaning *very loud* (his Italian is not very much more correct, you know, than his other languages), and how Napoleon took off his hat to him directly. I don't see the English papers, but I conclude you are all furious. You must make up your minds to it nevertheless — the Empire is certain, and the feeling of all but unanimity (whatever the motive) throughout France obvious enough. Smooth down the lion's mane of the 'Examiner,' and hint that roaring over a desert is a vain thing. As to Victor Hugo's book, the very enemies of the present state of affairs object to it that *he lies* simply. There is not enough truth in it for an invective to rest on, still less for an argument. It's an inarticulate cry of a bird of prey, wild and strong — irrational, and not a book at all. For my part I did wave my handkerchief for the new Emperor, but I bore the show very well, and said to myself, 'God bless the people!' as the man who, to my apprehension, represents the democracy, went past. A very intelligent Frenchman, caught in the crowd and forced to grope his way slowly along, told me that the expression of opinion everywhere was curiously the same, not a dissenting mutter did he hear. Strange, strange, all this! For the drama of history we must look to France, for startling situations, for the 'points' which thrill you to the bone. . . .

May God bless you meantime. Take care of yourself for the sake of us all who love you, none indeed more affectionately and gratefully than

R. B. and E. B. B.

CHAPTER VIII

1852–1855

The middle of November found the travellers back again in Florence, and it was nearly three years before they again quitted Italy. No doubt, after the excitement of the *coup d'état* in Paris, and the subsequent manœuvres of Louis Napoleon, which culminated in this very month in his exchanging the title of President for that of Emperor, Florence must have seemed very quiet, if not dull. The political movement there was dead; the Grand Duke, restored by Austrian bayonets, had abandoned all pretence at reform and constitutional progress. In Piedmont, Cavour had just been summoned to the head of the administration, but there were no signs as yet of the use he was destined to make of his power. Of politics, therefore, we hear little for the present.

Nor is there much to note at this time in respect of literature. A new edition of Mrs. Browning's poems was called for in 1853; but beyond some minor revisions of detail it did not differ from the edition of 1850. Her husband's play, 'Colombe's Birthday,' was produced at the Haymarket Theatre during April, with Miss Faucit (Lady Martin) in the principal part; but the poet had no share in the production, and his literary activity must have been devoted to the composition of some of the fine poems which subsequently formed the two volumes of 'Men and Women,' which appeared in 1855. Mrs. Browning had also embarked on her longest poem, 'Aurora Leigh,' and speaks

of being happily and busily engaged in work; but we hear little of it as yet in her correspondence. Her little son and her Florentine friends and visitors form her principal subjects; and we also see the beginning of a topic which for the next few years occupied a good deal of her attention — namely, Spiritualism.

The temperament of Mrs. Browning had in it a decidedly mystical vein, which predisposed her to believe in any communication between our world and that of the spirits. Hence when a number of people professed to have such communication, she was not merely ready to listen to their claims, but was by temperament inclined to accept them. The immense vogue which spiritualism had during 'the fifties' tended to confirm her belief. It was easy to say that where there was so much smoke there must be fire. And what she believed, she believed strongly and with a perfect conviction that no other view could be right. Just as her faith in Louis Napoleon survived the *coup d'état*, and even Villafranca, so her belief in communications with the spirit world was proof against any exposure of fraud on the part of the mediums. Not that she was guilty of the absurdities which marked many of the devotees of spiritualism. She had a great horror of submitting herself to mesmeric influences. She recognised that very many of the supposed revelations of the spirits were trivial, perhaps false; but to the fact that communications did exist she adhered constantly.

It is not of much interest now to discuss the ethics or the metaphysics of the 'rapping spirits;' but the subject deserves more than a passing mention in the life of Mrs. Browning, because it has been said, and apparently with authority, that 'the only serious difference which ever arose between Mr. Browning and his wife referred to the subject of spiritualism.'[1] It is quite certain that Mr. Browning did

[1] *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, p. 216.

not share his wife's belief in spiritualism; a reference to 'Sludge the Medium' is sufficient to establish his position in the matter. But it is easy to make too much of the supposed 'difference.' Certainly it has left no trace in Mrs. Browning's letters which are now extant. There is no sign in them that the divergence of opinion produced the slightest discord in the harmony of their life. No doubt Mr. Browning felt strongly as to the character of some of the persons, whether mediums or their devotees, with whom his wife was brought into contact, and he may have relieved his feelings by strong expressions of his opinion concerning them; but there is no reason to lay stress on this as indicating any serious difference between himself and his wife.

It has seemed necessary to say so much, lest it should be supposed that any of the omissions, which have been made in order to reduce the bulk of the letters within reasonable limits, cover passages in which such a difference is spoken of. In no single instance is this the case. The omissions have been made in the interests of the reader, not in order to affect in any way the representation which the letters give of their writer's feelings and character. With this preface they may be left to tell their own tale.

To Miss Browning

Florence: November 14, 1852 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — You can't think how pleased I am to find myself in Florence again in our own house, everything looking exactly as if we had left it yesterday. Scarcely I can believe that we have gone away at all. But Robert has been perfectly demoralised by Paris, and thinks it all as dull as possible after the boulevards: 'no life, no variety.' Oh, of course it *is* very dead in comparison! but it's a beautiful death, and what with the lovely climate, and the lovely associations, and the sense of repose, I could turn myself on my pillow and sleep on here to the end of my life; only be sure that I *shall do no such thing*. We are

going back to Paris; you will have us safe. Peninni had worked himself up to a state of complete agitation on entering Florence, through hearing so much about it. First he kissed me and then Robert again and again, as if his little heart were full. '*Poor Florence*,' said he while we passed the bridge. Certainly there never was such a darling since the world began. . . . I suffered extremely through our unfortunate election of the Mont Cenis route (much more my own fault than Robert's), and was extremely unwell at Genoa, to the extent of almost losing heart and hope, which is a most unusual case with me, but the change from Lyons had been too sudden and severe. At Genoa the weather was so exquisite, so absolutely June weather, that at the end of a week's lying on the sofa, I had rallied again quite, only poor darling Robert was horribly vexed and out of spirits all that time, as was natural. I feel myself, every now and then (and did then), like a weight round his neck, poor darling, though he does not account it so, for his part. Well, but it passed, and we were able to walk about beautiful Genoa the last two days, and visit Andrea Doria's palace and enjoy everything together. Then we came on by a night and day's diligence through a warm air, which made me better and better. By the way, Turin is nearly as cold as Chambéry; you can't believe yourself to be in Italy. Susa, at the foot of the Alps, is warmer. We were all delighted to hear the sound of our dear Italian, and inclined to be charmed with everything; and Peninni fairly expressed the kind of generalisations we were given to, when he observed philosophically, 'In Italy, pussytats don't never *scwatch*, mama.' This was in reply to an objection I had made to a project of his about kissing the head of an enchanting pussy-cat who presented herself in vision to him as we were dining at Turin. . . . God bless and preserve you. We love you dearly, and talk of you continually — of both of you. Your most affectionate sister,

BA.

Best love to your father. — Peninni.

To John Kenyon

Casa Guidi: November 23, 1852.

We flatter ourselves, dearest Mr. Kenyon, that as we think so much of you, you may be thinking a little of us, and will not be sorry — who knows? — to have a few words from us.

November 24.

Just as I was writing, had written, that sentence yesterday, came the letter which contained your notelet. Thank you, thank you, dearest friend, it is very pleasant to have such a sign from your hand across the Alps of kindness and remembrance. As to my sins in the choice of the Mont Cenis route, 'Bradshaw' was full of temptation, and the results to me have so entirely passed away now, that even the wholesome state of repentance is very faded in the colours. What chiefly remains is the sense of wonderful contrast between climate and climate when we found ourselves at Genoa and in June. I can't get rid of the astonishment of it even now. At Turin I had to keep up a fire most of the night in my bedroom, and at Genoa, with all the windows and doors open, we were gasping for breath, languid with the heat, blue burning skies overhead, and not enough stirring air for refreshment. Nothing less, perhaps, would have restored me so soon, and it was delightful to be able during our last two days of our ten days there to stand on Andrea Doria's terrace, and look out on that beautiful bay with its sweep of marble palaces. My 'unconquerable mind' even carried me halfway up the lighthouse for the sake of the 'view,' only there I had to stop ingloriously, and let Robert finish the course alone while I rested on a bench: aspiration is not everything, either in literature or lighthouses, you know, let us be ever so 'insolvent.'

Well, and since we left Turin, everywhere in Italy we have found summer, summer — not a fire have we needed even in Florence. Such mornings, such evenings, such

walkings out in the dusk, such sunsets over the Arno! ah, Mr. Kenyon, you in England forget what life is in this out-of-door fresh world, with your cloistral habits and necessities! I assure you I can't help fancying that the winter is over and gone, the past looks so cold and black in the warm light of the present. We have had some rain, but at night, and only thundery frank rains which made the next day warmer, and I have all but lost my cough, and am feeling very well and very happy.

Oh, yes, it made me glad to see our poor darling Florence again; I do love Florence when all's said against it, and when Robert (demoralised by Paris) has said most strongly that the place is dead, and dull, and flat, which it is, I must confess, particularly to our eyes fresh from the palpitating life of the Parisian boulevards, where we could scarcely find our way to Prichard's for the crowd during our last fortnight there. Poor Florence, so dead, as Robert says, and as we both feel, so trodden flat in the dust of the vineyards by these mules of Austria and these asses of the papacy: good heavens! how long are these things to endure? I do love Florence, when all's said. The very calm, the very dying stillness is expressive and touching. And then our house, our tables, our chairs, our carpets, everything looking rather better for our having been away! Overjoyed I was to feel myself *at home* again! our Italians so pleased to see us, Wiedeman's nurse rushing in, kissing my lips away almost, and seizing on the child, 'Dio mio, come è bellino!' the tears pouring down her cheeks, not able to look, for emotion, at the shawl we had brought her from England. Poor Italians! who can help caring for them, and feeling for them in their utter prostration just now? The unanimity of despair on all sides is an affecting thing, I can assure you. There is no mistake *here*, no possibility of mistake or doubt as to the sentiment of the people towards the actual régime; and if your English newspapers earnestly want to sympathise with an oppressed

people, let them speak a little for Tuscany. The most hopeful word we have heard uttered by the Italians is, 'Surely it cannot last.' It is the hope of the agonising.

But our 'carta di soggiorno' was sent to us duly. The government is not over learned in literature, oh no. . . .

And only Robert has seen Mr. Powers yet, for he is in the crisis of removal to a new house and studio, a great improvement on the last, and an excellent sign of prosperity of course. He is to come to us some evening as soon as he can take breath. We have had visits from the attachés at the English embassy here, Mr. Wolf, and Mr. Lytton,[1] Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's son, and I think we shall like the latter, who (a reason for my particular sympathy) is inclined to various sorts of spiritualism, and given to the magic arts. He told me yesterday that several of the American rapping spirits are imported to Knebworth, to his father's great satisfaction. A very young man, as you may suppose, the son is; refined and gentle in manners. Sir Henry Bulwer is absent from Florence just now.

As to our house, it really looks better to my eyes than it used to look. Mr. Lytton wondered yesterday how we could think of leaving it, and so do I, almost. The letting has answered well enough; that is, it has paid all expenses, leaving an advantage to us of a house during *six months*, at our choice to occupy ourselves or let again. Also it might have been let for a year (besides other offers), only our agent expecting us in September, and mistaking our intentions generally, refused to do so. Now I will tell you what our plans are. We shall stay here till we can let our house. If we don't let it we shall continue to occupy it, and put off Rome till the spring, but the probability is that we shall have an offer before the end of December, which will be quite time enough for a Roman winter. In fact, I hear of a fever at Rome and another at Naples, and would rather, on every

[1] The late Earl Lytton.

account, as far as I am concerned, stay a little longer in Florence. I can be cautious, you see, upon some points, and Roman fevers frighten me for our little Wiedeman.

As to your 'science' of 'turning the necessity of travelling into a luxury,' my dearest cousin, do let me say that, like some of the occult sciences, it requires a good deal of gold to work out. Your too generous kindness enabled us to do what we couldn't certainly have done without it, but nothing would justify us, you know, in not considering the cheapest way of doing things notwithstanding. So Bradshaw, as I say, tempted us, and the sight of the short cut in the map (pure delusion those maps are!) beguiled us, and we crossed the 'cold valley' and the 'cold mountain' when we shouldn't have done either, and we have bought experience and paid for it. Never mind! experience is nearly always worth its price. And I have nearly lost my cough, and Robert is dosing me indefatigably with cod's liver oil to do away with my thinness. . . .

Robert's best love, with that of your most

Gratefully affectionate

Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Florence: winter 1852–3.]

[*The beginning of the letter is lost.*]

The state of things here in Tuscany is infamous and cruel. The old serpent, the Pope, is wriggling his venom into the heart of all possibilities of free thought and action. It is a dreadful state of things. Austria the hand, the papal power the brain! and no energy in the victim for resistance — only for hatred. They do hate here, I am glad to say.

But we linger at Florence in spite of all. It was delightful to find ourselves in the old nest, still warm, of Casa Guidi, to sit in our own chairs and sleep in our own beds;

and here we shall stay as late perhaps as March, if we don't re-let our house before. Then we go to Rome and Naples. You can't think how we have caught up our ancient traditions just where we left them, and relapsed into our former soundless, stirless hermit life. Robert has not passed an evening from home since we came — just as if we had never known Paris. People come sometimes to have tea and talk with us, but that's all ; a few intelligent and interesting persons sometimes, such as Mr. Tennyson (the poet's brother) and Mr. Lytton (the novelist's son) and Mr. Stuart, the lecturer on Shakespeare, whom once I named to you, I fancy. Mr. Tennyson married an Italian, and has four children. He has much of the atmosphere poetic about him, a dreamy, speculative, shy man, reminding us of his brother in certain respects ; good and pure minded. I like him. Young Mr. Lytton is very young, as you may suppose, with all sorts of high aspirations — and visionary enough to suit *me*, which is saying much — and affectionate, with an apparent liking to us both, which is engaging to us, of course. We have seen the Trollopes once, the younger ones, but the elder Mrs. Trollope was visible neither at that time nor since. . . .

I sit here reading Dumas' 'last,' notwithstanding. Dumas is astonishing ; he never *will* write himself out ; there's no dust on his shoes after all this running ; his last books are better than his first.

Do your American friends write ever to you about the rapping spirits? I hear and would hear much of them. It is said that at least fifteen thousand persons in America, of all classes and society, are *mediums*, as the term is. Most curious these phenomena.

[*The end of the letter is lost.*]

To Miss Mitford

Casa Guidi, Florence: February [1853].

I had just heard of your accident from Arabel, my much loved friend, and was on the point of writing to you when your letter came. To say that I was shocked and grieved to hear such news of you, is useless indeed; you will feel how I have felt about it. May God bless and restore you, and make me very thankful, as certainly I must be in such a case. . . .

The comfort to me in your letter is the apparent good spirits you write in, and the cheerful, active intentions you have of work for the delight of us all. I clap my hands, and welcome the new volumes. Dearest friend, I do wish I had heard about the French poetry in Paris, for there I could have got at books and answered some of your questions. The truth is, I don't know as much about French modern poetry as I ought to do in the way of *métier*. The French essential poetry seems to me to flow out into prose works, into their school of romances, and to be least poetical when dyked up into rhythm. Mdme. Valmore I never read, but she is esteemed highly, I think, for a certain *naïveté*, and happy surprises in the thought and feeling, *des mots charmants*. I wanted to get her books in Paris, and missed them somehow; there was so much to think of in Paris. Alfred de Musset's poems I read, collected in a single volume; it is the only edition I ever met with. The French value him extremely for his *music;* and there is much in him otherwise to appreciate, I think; very beautiful things indeed. He is best to my mind when he is most lyrical, and when he says things in a breath. His elaborate poems are defective. One or two Spanish ballads of his seem to me perfect, really. He has great power in the introduction of familiar and conventional images without disturbing the ideal — a good power for these days. The worst is that the

moral atmosphere is *bad*, and that, though I am not, as you know, the very least bit of a prude (not enough perhaps), some of his poems must be admitted to be most offensive. Get St. Beuve's poems, they have much beauty in them you will grant at once. Then there is a Breton [1] poet whose name Robert and I have both of us been ungrateful enough to forget — we have turned our brains over and over and can't find the name anyhow — and who, indeed, deserves to be remembered, who writes some fresh and charmingly simple idyllic poems, one called, I think, 'Primel et Nola.' By that clue you may hunt him out perhaps in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes.' There's no strong imagination, understand — nothing of that sort! but you have a sweet, fresh, cool sylvan feeling with him, rare among Frenchmen of his class. Edgar Quinet has more positive genius. He is a man of grand, extravagant conceptions. Do you know the 'Ahasuerus'?

I wonder if the Empress pleases you as well as the Emperor. For my part, I approve altogether, and none the less that he has offended Austria by the mode of announcement. Every cut of the whip in the face of Austria is an especial compliment to me — or, *so I feel it*. Let him head the democracy and do his duty to the world, and use to the utmost his great opportunities. Mr. Cobden and the Peace Society are pleasing me infinitely just now in making head against the immorality (that's the word) of the English press. The tone taken up towards France is immoral in the highest degree, and the invasion cry would be idiotic if it were not something worse. The Empress, I heard the other day from good authority, is 'charming and good at heart.' She was educated 'at a respectable school at Bristol' (Miss Rogers's Royal Crescent, Clifton), and is very 'English,' which doesn't prevent her from shooting with pistols, leaping gates, driving 'four-in-hand,' and upsetting the carriage when the frolic requires it, as brave as a lion and as true as

[1] Auguste Brizieux.

a dog. Her complexion is like marble, white, pale and pure; her hair light, rather 'sandy,' they say, and she powders it with gold dust for effect; but there is less physical and more intellectual beauty than is generally attributed to her. She is a woman of 'very decided opinions.' I like all that, don't you? and I liked her letter to the Préfet, as everybody must. Ah, if the English press were in earnest in the cause of liberty, there would be something to say for our poor trampled-down Italy — much to say, I mean. Under my eyes is a people really oppressed, really groaning its heart out. But these things are spoken of with measure.

We are reading Lamartine and Proudhon on '48. We have plenty of French books here; only the poets are to seek — the moderns. Do you catch sight of Moore in diary and letters? Robert, who has had glimpses of him, says the 'flunkeyism' is quite humiliating. It is strange that you have not heard more of the rapping spirits. They are worth hearing of were it only in the point of view of the physiognomy of the times, as a sign of hallucination and credulity, if not more. Fifteen thousand persons in all ranks of society, and all degrees of education, are said to be *mediums*, that is *seers*, or rather hearers and recipients, perhaps. Oh, I can't tell you all about it; but the details are most curious. I understand that Dickens has caught a wandering spirit in London and showed him up victoriously in 'Household Words' as neither more nor less than the 'cracking of toe joints;' but it is absurd to try to adapt such an explanation to cases in general. You know I am rather a visionary, and inclined to knock round at all the doors of the present world to try to get out, so that I listen with interest to every goblin story of the kind, and, indeed, I hear enough of them just now.

We heard nothing, however, from the American Minister, Mr. Marsh, and his wife, who have just come from Constantinople in consequence of the change of Presidency, and who passed an evening with us a few days ago. She is pretty and interesting, a great invalid and almost blind, yet she has

lately been to Jerusalem, and insisted on being carried to the top of Mount Horeb. After which I certainly should have the courage to attempt the journey myself, if we had money enough. Going to the Holy Land has been a favorite dream of Robert's and mine ever since we were married, and some day you will wonder why I don't write, and hear suddenly that I am lost in the desert. You will wonder, too, at our wandering madness, by the way, more than at any rapping spirit extant; we have 'a spirit in our feet,' as Shelley says in his lovely Eastern song — and our child is as bad as either of us. He says, 'I *tuite* tired of *Flolence*. I want to go to *Brome*,' which is worse than either of us. I never am tired of Florence. Robert has had an application from Miss Faucit (now Mrs. Martin) to bring out his 'Colombe's Birthday' at the Haymarket.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Florence: March 3, 1853.

My dearest Isa, . . . You have seen in the papers that Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer has had an accident in the arm, which keeps him away from the House of Commons, and even from the Haymarket, where they are acting his play ('Not so bad as we seem') with some success. Well, here is a curious thing about it. Mr. Lytton told us some time ago, that, by several clairvoyantes, without knowledge or connection with one another, an impending accident had been announced to him, 'not fatal, but serious.' Mr. Lytton said, 'I have been very uneasy about it, and nervous as every letter arrived, but nearly three months having passed, I began to think they must have made a mistake — only it is curious that they all should *all* make a mistake of the same kind precisely.' When after this we saw the accident in the paper, it was effective, as you may suppose!

Profane or not, I am resolved on getting as near to a solution of the spirit question as I can, and I don't believe in the least risk of profanity, seeing that whatever is, must be permitted; and that the contemplation of whatever is, must be permitted also, where the intentions are pure and reverent. I can discern no more danger in psychology than in mineralogy, only intensely a greater interest. As to the spirits, I care less about what they are capable of communicating, than of the fact of there being communications. I certainly wouldn't set about building a system of theology out of their oracles. God forbid. They seem abundantly foolish, one must admit. There is probably, however, a mixture of good spirits and bad, foolish and wise, of the lower orders perhaps, in both kinds. . . .

Isa, you and I must try to make head against the strong-minded women, though really you half frighten me prospectively. . . .

—— ——, one of the strong-minded, we just escaped with life from in London, and again in Paris. In Rome she has us! What makes me talk so ill-naturedly is the information I have since received, that she has put everybody unfortunate enough to be caught, into a book, and published them at full length, in American fashion. Now I do confess to the greatest horror of being caught, stuck through with a pin, and beautifully preserved with other butterflies and beetles, even in the album of a Corinna in yellow silk. I detest that particular sort of victimisation. . . .

We are invited to go to Constantinople this summer, to visit the American Minister there. There's a temptation for you!

God bless you, dearest Isa. I shall be delighted to see you again, and so will Robert! I always feel (I say to him sometimes) that you love me a little, and that I may rest on you. Your ever affectionate friend,

Elizabeth B. Browning.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: March 15, [1853].

. . . The spring has surprised us here just as we were beginning to murmur at the cold. Think of somebody advising me the other day not to send out my child without a double-lined parasol! There's a precaution for March! The sun is powerful — we are rejoicing in our Italian climate. Oh, that I could cut out just a mantle of it to wrap myself in, and so go and see you. Your house is dry, you say. Is the room you occupy airy as well as warm? Because being confined to a small room, with you who are so used to liberty and out of door life, must be depressing to the vital energies. Do you read much? No, no, you ought not to think of the press, of course, till you are strong. Ah — if you should get to London to see our play, how glad I should be! We, too, talk of London, but somewhat mistily, and not so early in the summer. Mr. and Mrs. Marsh — he is the American Minister at Constantinople — have been staying in Florence, and passing some evenings with us. They tempt us with an invitation to Constantinople this summer, which would be irresistible if we had the money for the voyage, perhaps, so perhaps it is as well that we have not. Enough for us that we are going to Rome and to Naples, then northward. I am busy in the meanwhile with various things, a new poem, and revising for a third edition which is called for by the gracious public. Robert too is busy with another book. Then I am helping to make frocks for my child, reading Proudhon (and Swedenborg), and in deep meditation on the nature of the rapping spirits, upon whom, I understand, a fellow dramatist of yours, Henry Spicer (I think you once mentioned him to me as such), has just written a book entitled, 'The Mystery of the Age.' A happy winter it has been to me altogether. We have had so much repose, and at the same time so much interest in life, also I have been

so well, that I shall be sorry when we go out of the harbour again with the spring breezes. We like Mr. Tennyson extremely, and he is a constant visitor of ours: the poet's elder brother. By the way, the new edition of the Ode on the Duke of Wellington seems to contain wonderful strokes of improvement. Have you seen it? As to Alexandre Dumas, Fils, I hope it is not true that he is in any scrape from the cause you mention. He is very clever, and I have a feeling for him for his father's sake as well as because he presents a rare instance of intellectual heirship. Didn't I tell you of the prodigious success of his drama of the 'Dame aux Camélias,' which ran about a hundred nights last year, and is running again? how there were caricatures on the boulevards, showing the public of the pit holding up umbrellas to protect themselves from the tears rained down by the public of the boxes? how the President of the Republic went to see, and sent a bracelet to the first actress, and how the English newspapers called him immoral for it? how I went to see, myself, and cried so that I was ill for two days and how my aunt called *me* immoral for it? I was properly lectured, I assure you. She 'quite wondered how Mr. Browning could allow such a thing,' not comprehending that Mr. Browning never, or scarcely ever, does think of restraining his wife from anything she much pleases to do. The play was too painful, that was the worst of it, but I maintain it is a highly moral play, rightly considered, and the acting was most certainly most exquisite on the part of all the performers. Not that Alexandre Dumas, Fils, excels generally in morals (in his books, I mean), but he is really a promising writer as to cleverness, and when he has learnt a little more art he will take no low rank as a novelist. Robert has just been reading a tale of his called 'Diane de Lys,' and throws it down with — 'You must read that, Ba — it is clever — only outrageous as to the morals.' Just what I should expect from Alexandre Dumas, Fils. I have a tenderness for the whole family, you see.

You don't say a word to me of Mrs. Beecher Stowe. How did her book[1] impress you? No woman ever had such a success, such a fame; no man ever had, in a single book. For my part I rejoice greatly in it. It is an individual glory full of healthy influence and benediction to the world.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Jameson

Casa Guidi, Florence: March 17, [1853].

Thank you — how to thank you enough — for the too kind present of the 'Madonna,'[2] dearest Mona Nina. I will not wait to read it through — we have only *looked* through it, which is different; but there is enough seen so beautiful as to deserve the world's thanks, to say nothing of ours, and there are personal reasons besides why *we* should thank you. Have you not quoted us, have you not sent us the book? Surely, good reasons.

But now, be still better to me, and write and say how you are. I want to know that you are quite well; if you can tell me so, do. You have told me of a new book, which is excellent news, and I hear from another quarter that it will consist of your 'Readings' and 'Remarks,' a sort of book most likely to penetrate widely and be popular in a good sense. Would it not be well to bring out such a work volume by volume at intervals? Is it this you are contemplating? . . .

Robert and I have had a very happy winter in Florence; let me, any way, answer for myself. I have been well, and we have been quiet and occupied; reading books, doing work, playing with Wiedeman; and with nothing from without to vex us much. At the end of it all, we go to

[1] *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published in 1852.
[2] Mrs. Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*.

Rome certainly; but we have taken on this apartment for another year, which Robert decided on to please me, and because it was reasonable on the whole. We have been meditating Socialism and mysticism of very various kinds, deep in Louis Blanc and Proudhon, deeper in the German spiritualists, added to which, I have by no means given up my French novels and my rapping spirits, of whom our American guests bring us relays of witnesses. So we don't absolutely moulder here in the intellect, only Robert (and indeed I have too) has tender recollections of 'that blaze of life in Paris,' and we both mean to go back to it presently. No place like Paris for living in. Here, one sleeps, 'perchance to dream,' and praises the pillow.

We had a letter from our friend M. Milsand yesterday; you see he does not forget us — no, indeed. In speaking of the state of things in France, which I had asked him to do, he says, he is not sanguine (he never *is* sanguine, I must tell you, about anything), though entirely dissentient from *la presse Anglaise*. He considers on the whole that the *status* is as good as can be desired, as a *stable foundation for the development of future institutions*. It is in that point of view that he regards the situation. So do I. As to the English press, I, who am not 'anglomane' like our friend, I call it plainly either maniacal or immoral, let it choose the epithet. The invasion cry, for instance, I really can't qualify it; I can't comprehend it with motives all good and fair. I throw it over to you to analyse.

With regard to the sudden death of French literature, you all exaggerate that like the rest. If you look into even the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' for the year 1852, you will see that a few books are still published. *Pazienza*. Things will turn up better than you suppose. Newspapers breathe heavily just now, that's undeniable; but for book literature the government *never has* touched it with a finger. I ascertained *that* as a fact when I was in Paris.

None of you in England understand what the crisis has

been in France, and how critical measures have been necessary. Lamartine's work on the revolution of '48 is one of the best apologies for Louis Napoleon; and, if you want another, take Louis Blanc's work on the same.

Isn't it a shame that nobody comes from the north to the south, after a hundred oaths? I hear nothing of dear Mr. Kenyon. I hear nothing from you of *your* coming. You won't come, any of you. . . .

I am much relieved by hearing that Mazzini is gone from Italy, whatever Lord Malmesbury may say of it. Every day I expected to be told that he was taken at Milan and shot. A noble man, though incompetent, I think, to his own aspiration; but a man who personally has my sympathies always. The state of things here is cruel, the people are one groan. God deliver us all, I must pray, and by almost any means.

As to your Ministry, I don't expect very much from it. Lord Aberdeen, 'put on' to Lord John, is using the drag uphill. They will do just as little as they can, be certain.

Think of my submitting at last to the conjugal will and cod's liver oil — yes, and think of it's doing me good. The cough was nearly, if not quite, gone because of the climate, before I took the oil, but it does me good by making me gain in flesh. I am much less thin, and very well, and dearest Robert triumphant.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: April 12, [1853].

The comfort is, my ever loved friend, that here is spring — summer, as translated into Italy — if fine weather is to set you up again. I shall be very thankful to have better news of you; to hear of your being out of that room and loosened into some happy condition of liberty. It seems unnatural to think of you in one room. *That* seems fitter for *me*, doesn't it? And the rooms in England are so low and

small, that they put double bars on one's captivity. May God bring you out with the chestnut trees and elms! It's very sad meanwhile.

Comfort yourself, dear friend! Admire Louis Napoleon. He's an extraordinary man beyond all doubt; and that he has achieved great good for France, *I* do not in the least doubt. I was only telling you that I had not finished my pedestal for him — wait a little. Because, you see, for my part, I don't go over to the system of 'mild despotisms,' no, indeed. I am a democrat to the bone of me. It is simply as a democratical ruler, and by grace of the people, that I accept him, and he must justify himself by more deeds to his position before he glorifies himself before *me*. That's what I mean to say. A mild despot in France, let him be the Archangel Gabriel, unless he hold the kingdom in perpetuity, what is the consequence? A successor like the Archangel Lucifer, perhaps. Then, for the press, where there is thought, there must be discussion or conspiracy. Are you aware of the amount of readers in France? Take away the 'Times' newspaper, and the blow falls on a handful of readers, on a section of what may be called the aristocracy. But everybody reads in France. Every fiacre driver who waits for you at a shop door, beguiles the time with a newspaper. It is on that account that the influence of the press is dangerous, you will say. Precisely so; but also, on that account too, it is necessary. No; I hold, myself, that he will give more breathing room to France, as circumstances admit of it. Else, there will be convulsion. You will see. We shall see. And Louis Napoleon, who is wise, *fore*sees, I cannot doubt.

Not read Mrs. Stowe's book! But you *must*. Her book is quite a sign of the times, and has otherwise and intrinsically considerable power. For myself, I rejoice in the success, both as a woman and a human being. Oh, and is it possible that you think a woman has no business with questions like the question of slavery? Then she had better

use a pen no more. She had better subside into slavery and concubinage herself, I think, as in the times of old, shut herself up with the Penelopes in the 'women's apartment,' and take no rank among thinkers and speakers. Certainly you are not in earnest in these things. A difficult question — yes! All virtue is difficult. England found it difficult. France found it difficult. But we did not make ourselves an armchair of our sins. As for America, I honor America in much; but I would not be an American for the world while she wears that shameful scar upon her brow. The address of the new President[1] exasperates me. Observe, I am an abolitionist, not to the fanatical degree, because I hold that compensation should be given by the North to the South, as in England. The States should unite in buying off this national disgrace.

The Americans are very kind and earnest, and I like them all the better for their warm feeling towards you. Is Longfellow agreeable in his personal relations? We knew his brother, I think I told you, in Paris. I suppose Mr. Field has been liberal to Thackeray, and yet Thackeray does not except him in certain observations on American publishers. We shall have an arrangement made of some sort, it appears. Mr. Forster wants me to add some new poems to my new edition, in order to secure the copyright under the new law. But as the law does not act backwards, I don't see how new poems would save me. They would just sweep out the new poems — that's all. One or two lyrics could not be made an object, and in those two thick volumes, nearly bursting with their present contents, there would not be room for many additions. No, I shall add nothing. I have revised the edition very carefully, and made everything better. It vexed me to see how much there was to do. Positively, even rhymes left unrhymed in 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship.' You don't write so carelessly,

[1] General Franklin Pierce.

not you, and the reward is that you haven't so much trouble in your new editions. I see your book advertised in a stray number of the 'Athenæum' lent to me by Mr. Tennyson — Frederick. He lent it to me because I wanted to see the article on the new poet, Alexander Smith, who appears so applauded everywhere. He has the poet's *stuff* in him, one may see from the extracts. Do you know him? And Coventry Patmore — have you heard anything of *his* book,[1] of which appears an advertisement?

Ah, yes; how unfortunate that you should have parted with your copyrights! It's a bad plan always, except in the case of novels which have their day, and no day after.

The poem I am about will fill a volume when done. It is the novel or romance I have been hankering after so long, written in blank verse, in the autobiographical form; the heroine, an artist woman — not a painter, mind. It is intensely modern, crammed from the times (not the 'Times' newspaper) as far as my strength will allow. Perhaps you won't like it, perhaps you will. Who knows? who dares hope?

I am beginning to be anxious about 'Colombe's Birthday.' I care much more about it than Robert does. He says that nobody will mistake it for *his* speculation, it's Mr. Buckstone's affair altogether. True; but I should like it to succeed, being Robert's play notwithstanding. But the play is subtle and refined for pits and galleries. I am nervous about it. On the other hand, those theatrical people ought to know; and what in the world made them select it if it is not likely to answer their purpose? By the way, a dreadful rumour reaches us of its having been '*prepared for the stage by the author*.' Don't believe a word of it. Robert just said 'yes' when they wrote to ask him, and not a line of communication has passed since. He has prepared nothing at all, suggested nothing, modified nothing.

[1] 'Tamerton Church Tower, and other Poems.'

He referred them to his new edition; and that was the whole.

We see a great deal of Mr. Tennyson. Robert is very fond of him, and so am I. He too writes poems, and prints them, though not for the public. They are better and stronger than Charles Tennyson's, and he has the poetical temperament in everything. Did I tell you that he had married an Italian, and had children from twelve years old downwards? He is intensely English nevertheless, as expatriated Englishmen generally are. I always tell Robert that his patriotism grows and deepens in exact proportion as he goes away from England. As for me, it is not so with me. I am very cosmopolitan, and am considerably tired of the self-deification of the English nation at the expense of all others. We have some noble advantages over the rest of the world, but it is not all advantage. The shameful details of bribery, for instance, prove what I have continually maintained, the non-representativeness of our 'representative system;' and, socially speaking, we are much behindhand with most foreign peoples. Let us be proud in the right place, I say, and not in the wrong. We see too a good deal of young Lytton, Sir Edward's only son, an interesting young man, with various sorts of good, and aspiration to good, in him. You see we are not at Rome yet. Do write to me. Speak of yourself particularly. God bless you, dearest friend. Believe that I think of you and love you most faithfully.

BA.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: April 21, 1853.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am in consternation and vexation on receiving your letter. What you must have thought of me all this time! Of course I never saw the letters which went to Rome. Letters sent to Poste restante, Rome, are generally lost, even if you are a Roman; and

we are no Romans, alas! nor likely to become such, it seems to me. There's a fatality about Rome to us. I waited for you to write, and then waited on foolishly for the settlement of our own plans, after I had ascertained that you were not in Devonshire, but in France as usual. Now, I can't help writing, though I have written a letter already which must have crossed yours — a long letter — so that you will have more than enough of me this time.

It's comfort and pleasure after all to have a good account of you both, my very dear friends, even though one knows by it that you have been sending one 'al diavolo' for weeks or months. Forgive me, do. I feel guilty somehow to the extreme degree, that four letters should have been written to me, even though I received none of them, because I ought to have written at least one letter in that time.

Your politics would be my politics on most points; we should run together more than halfway, if we could stand side by side, in spite of all your vindictiveness to N. III. My hero — say you? Well, I have more belief in him than you have. And what is curious, and would be unaccountable, I suppose, to English politicians in general, the Italian democrats of the lower classes, the popular clubs in Florence, are clinging to him as their one hope. Ah, here's oppression! here's a people trodden down! You should come here and see. It is enough to turn the depths of the heart bitter. The will of the people forced, their instinctive affections despised, their liberty of thought spied into, their national life ignored altogether. Robert keeps saying, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' Such things cannot last, surely. Oh, this brutal Austria.

I myself expect help from Louis Napoleon, though scarcely in the way that the clubs are said to do. When I talk of a club, of course I mean a secret combination of men — young men who meet to read forbidden newspapers and talk forbidden subjects. He won't help the Mazzinians, but he will do something for Italy, you will see. The

Cardinals feel it, and that's why they won't let the Pope go to Paris. We shall see. I seem to catch sight of the grey of dawn even in the French Government papers, and am full of hope.

As to Mazzini, he is a noble man and an unwise man. Unfortunately the epithets are compatible. Kossuth is neither very noble nor very wise. I have heard and *felt* a great deal of harm of him. The truth is not in him. And when a patriot lies like a Jesuit, what are we to say?

For England — do you approve of the fleet staying on at Malta? We are prepared to do nothing which costs us a halfpenny for a less gain than three farthings — always excepting the glorious national defences, which have their end too, though not the one generally attributed. . . .

God bless you, my dear, dear friends! Care in your thoughts for us all!

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To John Kenyon

Casa Guidi: May 16, [1853].

My dearest Mr. Kenyon, — You are to be thanked and loved as ever, and what can we say more? This: Do be good to us by a supererogatory virtue and write to us. You can't know how pleasant it is to be *en rapport* with you, though by holding such a fringe of a garment as a scrap of letter is. We don't see you, we don't hear you! 'Rap' to us with the end of your pen, like the benign spirit you are, and let me (who am credulous) believe that you care for us and think kindly of us in the midst of your brilliant London gossipry, and that you don't disdain the talk of us, dark ultramontanists as we are. You are good to us in so many ways, that it's a reason for being good in another way besides. At least, to reason so is one of the foolishnesses of my gratitude.

On the whole, I am satisfied with regard to 'Colombe.'

I never expected a theatrical success, properly and vulgarly so called; and the play has taken rank, to judge by the various criticisms, in the right way, as a true poet's work: the defects of the acting drama seemed recognised as the qualities of the poem. It was impossible all that subtle tracery of thought and feeling should be painted out clear red and ochre with a house-painter's brush, and lose nothing of its effect.[1] A play that runs nowadays has generally four legs to run with — something of the beast to keep it going. The human biped with the 'os divinior' is slower than a racehorse even. What I hope is, that the poetical appreciation of 'Colombe' will give an impulse to the sale of the poems, which will be more acceptable to us than the other kind of success. . . .

Yes, dearest Mr. Kenyon, we mean, if we can, to go to Rome in the autumn. It is very wrong of you not to come too, and the reasons you give against it are by no means conclusive. My opinion is that, whatever the term of your natural life may be, you would probably have an additional ten years fastened on to it by coming to the Continent, and so I tease you and tease you, as is natural to such an opinion. People twirl now in their arm-chairs, and the vitality in them kindles as they rush along. Remember how pleased you were when you were at Como! Don't draw a chalk circle round you and fancy you can't move. Even tables and chairs have taken to move lately, and hats spin round without a giddy head in them. Is this a time to stand still, even in the garden at Wimbledon? 'I speak to a wise man; judge what I say.'

We tried the table experiment in this room a few days

[1] In a letter to Miss Mitford, written four days later than this, Mrs. Browning alludes again to the performance of 'Colombe's Birthday:' 'Yes — Robert's play succeeded, but there could be no "run" for a play of that kind; it was a *succès d'estime* and something more, which is surprising, perhaps, considering the miserable acting of the men. Miss Faucit was alone in doing us justice.'

since, by-the-bye, and failed; but we were impatient, and Robert was playing Mephistopheles, as Mr. Lytton said, and there was little chance of success under the circumstances. It has been done several times in Florence, and the fact of the possibility seems to have passed among 'attested facts.' There was a placard on the wall yesterday about a pamphlet purporting to be an account of these and similar phenomena 'Scoperte a Livorno,' referring to 'oggetti semoventi' and other wonders. You can't even look at a wall without a touch of the subject. The *circoli* at Florence are as revolutionary as ever, only tilting over tables instead of States, alas! From the Legation to the English chemist's, people are 'serving tables' (in spite of the Apostle) everywhere. When people gather round a table it isn't to play whist. So good, you say. You can believe in table-moving, because *that* may be 'electricity;' but you can't believe in the 'rapping spirits,' with the history of whom these movements are undeniably connected, because it's 'a jump.' Well, but you will jump when the time comes for jumping, and when the evidence is strong enough. I know you; you are strong enough and true enough to jump at anything, without being afraid. The tables jump, observe — and *you* may jump. Meanwhile, if you were to hear what we heard only the evening before last from a cultivated woman with truthful, tearful eyes, whose sister is a medium, and whose mother believes herself to be in daily communion with her eldest daughter, dead years ago — if you were to hear what we hear from nearly all the Americans who come to us, their personal experiences, irrespectively of paid mediums, I wonder if you would admit the possibility of your even jumping! Robert, who won't believe, he says, till he sees and hears with his own senses — Robert, who is a sceptic — observed of himself the other day, that we had received as much evidence of these spirits as of the existence of the town of Washington. But then of course he would add — and you

would, reasonably enough — that in a matter of this kind (where you have to jump) you require more evidence, double the evidence, to what you require for the existence of Washington. That's true.

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: June, [1853].

My dearest Fanny, — I hope you will write to me as if I deserved it. You see, my first word is to avert the consequences of my sin instead of repenting of it in the proper and effectual way. The truth is, that ever since I received your letter we have been looking out for 'messengers' from the Legation, so as to save you postage; while the Embassy people have been regularly forgetting us whenever there has been an opportunity. By the way, I catch up that word of 'postage' to beg you *never to think of it* when inclined in charity to write to us. If you knew what a sublunary thing — oh, far below any visible moon! — postage is to us exiles! Too glad we are to get a letter and pay for it. So write to me *directly*, dear Fanny, when you think enough of us for that, and write at length, and tell us of yourself first, swirling off into Pope's circles — 'your country first and then the human race' — and, indeed, we get little news from home on the subjects which especially interest us. My sister sends me heaps of near things, but she is not in the magnetic circles, nor in the literary, nor even in the gossiping. Be good to us, *you* who stand near the fountains of life! Every cup of cold water is worth a ducat here.

To wait to a second page without thanking you for your kindness and sympathy about 'Colombe' does not do justice to the grateful sense I had of both at the time, and have now. We were *very* glad to have your opinion and impressions. Most of our friends took for granted that we had

supernatural communications on the subject, and did not send us a word. Mrs. Duncan Stewart was one of the kind exceptions (with yourself and one or two more), and I write to thank her. It was very pleasant to hear what you said, dear Fanny. Certainly, says the author, you are right, and Helen Faucit wrong, in the particular reading you refer to; but she seems to have been right in so much, that we should only remember our grateful thoughts of her in general.

Now what am I to say about my illustrations — that is, your illustrations of my poems? To thank you again and again first. To be eager next to see what is done. To be sure it is good, and surer still that *you* are good for spending your strength on me. See how it is. When you wrote to me, a new edition was in the press; yes, and I was expecting every day to hear it was out again. But it would not have done, I suppose, to have used illustrations for that sort of edition; it would have raised the price (already too high) beyond the public. But there will be time always for such arrangements — when it so pleases Mr. Chapman, I suppose. Do tell me more of what you have done.

We did not go to Rome last winter, in spite of the spirits of the sun who declared from Lord Stanhope's crystal ball, you remember, that we should. And we don't go to England till next summer, because we must see Rome next winter, and must lie *perdus* in Italy meantime. I have had a happy winter in Florence, recovered my lost advantages in point of health, been busy and tranquil, and plenty of books and talk, and seen my child grow rosier and prettier (said aside) every day. Robert and I are talking of going up to the monasteries beyond Vallombrosa for a day or two, on mule-back through forests and mountains. We have had an excursion to Prato (less difficult) already, and we keep various dreams in our heads to be acted out on occasion. Our favorite friend here is a brother of Alfred Tennyson's, himself a poet, but most admirable to

me for his simplicity and truth. Robert is very fond of him. Then we like Powers — of the 'Greek Slave' — Swedenborgian and spiritualist; and Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's son, who is with us often, and always a welcome visitor. All these confederate friends are ranged with me on the believing side with regard to the phenomena, and Robert has to keep us at bay as he best can. Oh, do tell me what you can. Your account deeply interested me. We have heard many more intimate personal relations from Americans who brush us with their garments as they pass through Florence, and I should like to talk these things over with you. Paid mediums, as paid clairvoyants in general, excite a prejudice; yet, perhaps, not reasonably. The curious fact in this movement is, however, the degree in which it works within private families in America. Has anything of the kind appeared in England? And has the motion of the tables ever taken the form of alphabetical expression, which has been the case in America? I had a letter from Athens the other day, mentioning that 'nothing was talked of there except moving tables and spiritual manifestations.' (The writer was not a believer.) Even here, from the priest to the Mazzinian, they are making circles. An engraving of a spinning table at a shop window bears this motto: '*E pur si muove!*' That's adroit for Galileo's land, isn't it? Now mind you tell me whatever you hear and see. How does Mrs. Crowe decide? By the way, I was glad to observe by the papers that she has had a dramatic success.

Your Alexander Smith has noble stuff in him. It's undeniable, indeed. It strikes us, however, that he has more imagery than verity, more colour than form. He will learn to be less arbitrary in the use of his figures — of which the opulence is so striking — and attain, as he ripens, more clearness of outline and depth of intention. Meanwhile none but a poet could write this, and this, and this.

Your faithfully affectionate

E. B. B., properly speaking Ba.

July 3.

This was written ever so long since. Here we are in July; but I won't write it over again. The 'tables' are speaking alphabetically and intelligently in Paris; they knock with their legs on the floor, establishing (what was clear enough before to *me*) the connection between the table-moving and 'rapping spirits.' Sarianna — who is of the unbelieving of temperaments, as you know — wrote a most curious account to me the other day of a séance at which she had been present, composed simply of one or two of our own honest friends and of a young friend of theirs, a young lady. . . .[1] She says that she 'was not as much impressed as she would have been,' 'but I am bound to tell the truth, that I *do not think it possible that any tricks could have been played.*'

This from Sarianna is equal to the same testimony — from Mr. Chorley, say!

We are planning a retreat into the mountains — into Giotto's country, the Casentino — where we are to find a villa for almost nothing, and shall have our letters sent daily from Florence, together with books and newspapers. I look forward to it with joy. We promise one another to be industrious *à faire frémir*, so as to make the pleasure lawful. Little Penini walks about, talking of 'mine villa,' anxiously hoping that 'some boys' may not have pulled all the flowers before he gets there. He boasts, with considerable complacency, that 'a table in Pallis says I am four years,' though the fact doesn't strike him as extraordinary.

Do you ever see Mr. Kenyon? I congratulate you on your friend's 'Cœur de Lion.' *That* has given you pleasure.

The summer 'retreat' from Florence this year was not to the Casentino after all, but to the Baths of Lucca, which they had already visited in 1849. During their stay there, which lasted from July to October, Mr. Browning is said to have composed 'In a Balcony.'

[1] A few lines have been cut off the letter at this place.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 15, 1853.

. . . We have taken a villa at the Baths of Lucca, after a little holy fear of the company there; but the scenery, the coolness, and the convenience altogether prevail, and we have taken our villa for three months or rather more, and go to it next week with a stiff resolve of not calling nor being called upon. You remember perhaps that we were there four years ago, just after the birth of our child. The mountains are wonderful in beauty, and we mean to buy our holiday by doing some work.

Yesterday evening we had the American Minister at the Court of Turin here, and it was delightful to hear him talk about Piedmont, its progress in civilisation and the comprehension of liberty, and the honesty and resolution of the King. It is the only hope of Italy, that Piedmont! God prosper the hope. Besides this diplomatical dignitary and his wife, we had two American gentlemen of more than average intelligence, who related wonderful things of the 'spiritual manifestations' (so called), incontestable things, inexplicable things. You will have seen Faraday's letter.[1] I wish to reverence men of science, but they often will not let me. If *I* know certain facts on this subject, Faraday *ought* to have known them before he expressed an opinion on it. His statement does not meet the facts of the case — it is a statement which applies simply to various amateur operations without touching on the essential phenomena, such as the moving of tables untouched by a finger.

Our visitor last night, to say nothing of other witnesses, has repeatedly seen this done with his eyes — in private

[1] A letter to the *Athenæum* on July 2, 1853, giving the result of some experiments in table-turning, the tendency of which was to show that the motion of the table was due to unconscious muscular action on the part of the persons touching the table.

houses, for instance, where there could be no machinery — and he himself and his brother have held by the legs of a table to prevent the motion — the medium sitting some yards away — and that table has been wrenched from their grasp and lifted into the air. My husband's sister, who has admirable sense and excessive scepticism on all matters of the kind, was present the other day at the house of a friend of ours in Paris, where an English young lady was medium, and where the table expressed itself intelligently by knocking, with its leg, responses according to the alphabet. For instance, the age of my child was asked, and the leg knocked four times. Sarianna was 'not impressed,' she says, but, 'being bound to speak the truth, she does not *think it possible that any trick could have been used*.' To hear her say so was like hearing Mr. Chorley say so; all her prejudices were against it strongly. Mr. Spicer's book on the subject is flippant and a little vulgar, but the honesty and accuracy of it have been attested to me by Americans oftener than once. By the way, he speaks in it of your interesting 'Recollections,' and quotes you upon the possibility of making a ghost story better by the telling — in reference to Washington.

Mr. Tennyson is going to England for a few months, so that our Florence party is breaking up, you see. He has printed a few copies of his poems, and is likely to publish them if he meets with encouragement in England, I suppose. They are full of imagery, encompassed with poetical atmosphere, and very melodious. On the other hand, there is vagueness and too much personification. It's the smell of a rose rather than a rose — very sweet, notwithstanding. His poems are far superior to Charles Tennyson's, bear in mind. As for the poet, we quite love him, Robert and I do. What Swedenborg calls 'selfhood,' the *proprium*, is not in him.

Oh yes! I confess to loving Florence and to having associated with it the idea of *home*. My child was born

here, and here I have been very happy and *well*. Yet we shall not live in Florence — we are steady to our Paris plan. We must visit Rome next winter, and in the spring we shall go to Paris *via* London ; you may rely on us for next summer. I think it too probable that I may not be able to bear two successive winters in the North ; but in that case it will be easy to take a flight for a few winter months into Italy, and we shall regard Paris, where Robert's father and sister are waiting for us, as our fixed place of residence. As to the distance between Paris and London, it's a mere step now. We are to have war, I suppose. I would not believe it for a long while, but the Czar seems to be struck with madness — mad in good earnest. Under these circumstances I hope our Ministry will act with decision and honesty — but I distrust Lord Aberdeen. There is evidently, or has been, a division in the Cabinet, and perhaps Lord Palmerston is not the strongest. Louis Napoleon has acted excellently in this conjuncture — with integrity and boldness — don't you think so? Dear Mr. Kenyon has his brother and sister with him, to his great joy. Robert pretended he would not give me your last letter. Little Wiedeman threw his arms round my neck (taking the play-cruelty for earnest) and exclaimed, 'Never mind, mine darling Ba ! You'll have it.' He always calls me Ba at coaxing times. Such a darling that child is, indeed !

God bless you ! Do write soon and tell me in detail of yourself.

Our united love, but mine the closest !

Your ever most affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss I. Blagden

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca :
July 26, [1853].

I deserve another scold for this other silence, dearest Isa. Scold as softly as you can ! We have been in uncertainty about leaving Florence — where to go for the

summer — and I did not like to write till I could tell you where to write to *me*. Now we are 'fixed,' as our American friends would say. We have taken this house for three months — a larger house than we need. We have a row of plane trees before the door, in which the cicale sing all day, and the beautiful mountains stand close around, keeping us fresh with shadows. Penini thinks he is in Eden — *at least he doesn't think otherwise*. We have a garden and an arbour, and the fireflies light us up at nights. With all this, I am sorry for Florence. Florence was horribly hot, and pleasant notwithstanding. We hated cutting the knot of friends we had there — bachelor friends, Isa, who came to us for coffee and smoking! I was gracious and permitted the cigar (as you were not present), and there were quantities of talk, controversy, and confidences evening after evening. One of our very favourite friends, Frederick Tennyson, is gone to England, or was to have gone, for three months. Mr. Lytton had a reception on the terrace of his villa at Bellosguardo the evening before our last in Florence, and we were all bachelors together there, and I made tea, and we ate strawberries and cream and talked spiritualism through one of the pleasantest two hours that I remember. Such a view! Florence dissolving in the purple of the hills; and the stars looking on. Mr. Tennyson was there, Mr. Powers, and M. Villari,[1] an accomplished Sicilian, besides our young host and ourselves. How we 'set down' Faraday for his 'arrogant and insolent letter,' and what stories we told, and what miracles we swore to! Oh, we are believers here, Isa, except Robert, who persists in wearing a coat of respectable scepticism — so considered — though it is much out of elbows and ragged about the skirts. If I am right, you will none of you be able to disbelieve much longer — a new law, or a new development of law, is making way everywhere. We have heard much — more than I can tell you in a letter. Imposture is absolutely out of the question, to speak generally; and unless you explain the phenomena by

[1] Senatore Villari.

'a personality unconsciously projected' (which requires explanation of itself), you must admit the spirit theory. As to the simpler forms of the manifestation (it is all one manifestation), the 'turning-tables,' I was convinced long before Faraday's letter that *many* of the amateur performances were from involuntary muscular action — but what then? These are only imitations of actual phenomena. Faraday's letter does not meet the common fact of tables being moved and lifted without the touch of a finger. It is a most arrogant letter and singularly inconclusive. Tell me any facts you may hear. Mr. Kinney, the American Minister at the Court of Turin, had arrived at Florence a few days before we quitted it, and he and his wife helped us to spend our last evening at Casa Guidi. He is cultivated and high-minded. I like him much; and none the less that he brings hopeful accounts of the state of Piedmont, of the progress of the people, and good persistency of the King. It makes one's heart beat with the sense that all is not over with our poor Italy.

I am glad you like Frederick Tennyson's poems. They are full of *atmospherical* poetry, and very melodious. The poet is still better than the poems — so truthful, so direct, such a reliable Christian man. Robert and I quite love him. We very much appreciate, too, young Lytton, your old friend. He is noble in many ways, I think, and affectionate. Moreover, he has an incontestable *faculty* in poetry, and I expect great things from him as he ripens into life and experience. Meanwhile he has just privately printed a drama called 'Clytemnestra,' too ambitious because after Æschylus, but full of promise indeed. We are hoping that he will come down and see us in the course of our rustication at the Baths, and occupy our spare bedroom. . . .

As to Mr. ——, his Hebrew was Chinese to *you*, do you say? But, dear, he is strong in veritable Chinese besides! And one evening he nearly assassinated me with the analysis, chapter by chapter, of a Japanese novel. Mr.

Lytton, who happened to be a witness, swore that I grew paler and paler, and not with sympathy for the heroine. He is a miraculously vain man — which rather amused me — and, for the rest, is full of information — yes, and of kindness, I think. He gave me a little black profile of you which gives the air of your head, and is so far valuable to me. As to myself, indeed, he has rather flattered me than otherwise — I don't complain, I assure you. How could I complain of a man who compares me to Isaiah, under any circumstances? . . .

God bless you! Robert's love with that of

Your ever affectionate and faithful

Ba.

To Mr. Chorley

Casa Tolomei (Alla Villa), Bagni di Lucca:
August 10, [1853].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — I can't bear that you should intimate by half a word that you are 'a creature to be eaten' — viz. not to have your share in friendship and confidence. Now, if you fancy that we, for instance, don't affectionately regard you, you are very wrong, and I am very right for feeling inclined to upbraid you. I take the pen from Robert — he would take it if I did not. We scramble a little for the pen which is to tell you this — which is to say it again and again, and be dull in the reiteration, rather than not instruct you properly, as we teach our child to do — D O G, dog; D O G, dog; D O G, dog. Says Robert, 'What a slow business!' Yet he's a quick child; and you too must be quick and comprehending, or we shall take it to heart sadly. Often I think, and we say to one another, that we belied ourselves to you in England. If you knew how, at that time, Robert was vexed and worn! — why, he was not the same even to *me!* He seemed to himself to be slipping out of waistcoats and friends at once — so worn and teased he was! But then and now believe that he loved and loves you. Set him down as a friend — as somebody

to 'rest on' after all; and don't fancy that because we are away here in the wilderness (which blossoms as a rose, to one of us at least) we may not be full of affectionate thoughts and feelings towards you in your different sort of life in London. So sorry we are — I especially, for I think I understand the grief especially — about the household troubles which you hint at and Mr. Kenyon gave us a key to. I quite understand how a whole life may seem rumpled up and creased — torn for the moment: only you will live it smooth again, dear Mr. Chorley — take courage. You have time and strength and good aims, and human beings have been happy with much less. I understate your advantages on purpose, you see. I heard you talked of in Florence when Miss Cushman, in the quarter of an hour she gave us at Casa Guidi, told us of the oath she had in heaven to bring out your play and make it a triumph. How she praised the play, and you! Twice I have spoken with her — once on a balcony on the boulevard, when together we saw Louis Napoleon enter Paris in immediate face of the empire, and that once in Florence. I like the 'manly soul' in her face and manners. Manly, not masculine — an excellent distinction of Mrs. Jameson's. By the way, we hear wonderful things of the portrait painted of Miss Cushman at Rome by Mr. Page the artist, called 'the American Titian' by the Americans. . . .

There I stop, not to 'fret' you beyond measure. Besides, now that you Czars of the 'Athenæum' have set your Faradays on us, ukase and knout, what Pole, in the deepest of the brain, would dare to have a thought on the subject? Now that Professor Faraday has 'condescended,' as the 'Literary Gazette' affectingly puts it (and the condescension is sufficiently obvious in the letter — 'how we stoop!') — now that Professor Faraday has condescended to explain the whole question — which had offered some difficulty, it is admitted, to 'hundreds of intelligent men, including five or six eminent men of science,' in Paris, and,

we may add, to thousands of unintelligent men elsewhere, including the eminent correspondent of the 'Literary Gazette' — let us all be silent for evermore. For my part, I won't say that Lord Bacon would have explained any question to a child even without feeling it to be an act of condescension. I won't hint under my breath that Lord Bacon reverenced every *fact* as a footstep of Deity, and stooped to pick up every rough, ungainly stone of a fact, though it were likely to tear and deform the smooth wallet of a theory. I, for my part, belong, you know, not to the 'eminent men of science,' nor even to the 'intelligent men,' but simply to the women, children (and poets?), and if we happen to see with our eyes a table lifted from the floor without the touch of a finger or foot, let no dog of us bark — much less a puppy-dog! The famous letter holds us gagged. What it does not hold is the facts; but, *en revanche*, the writer and his abettors know the secret of being invincible — which is, not to fight. My child proposed a donkey-race yesterday, the condition being that he should ride first. Somebody told me once that when Miss Martineau has spoken eloquently on one side of a question, she drops her ear-trumpet to give the opportunity to her adversary. Most controversies, to do justice to the world, are conducted on the same plan and terms.

What I do venture however to say is that it's *not* all over in Paris because of Faraday's letter. *Ask Lamartine.* What I hear and what the 'Literary Gazette' hears from Paris is by no means the same thing. I hear Hebrew while the 'Gazette' hears Dutch — a miracle befitting the subject, or what was once considered to be the subject (I beg Professor Faraday's pardon), before it was annihilated.

How pert women can be, can't they, Mr. Chorley? particularly when they are safe among the mountains, shut in with a row of seven plane-trees joined at top. I won't go on to offer myself as 'spiritual correspondent to the "Athenæum,"' though I have a modest conviction that it

might increase your sale considerably. Ah, tread us down! put us out! You will have some trouble with us yet. The opposition Czar of St. Petersburg supports us, be it known, and Louis Napoleon comes to us for oracles. The King of Holland is going mad gently in our favour — quite absorbed, says an informant. But I won't quote kings. It is giving oneself too great a disadvantage.

We stayed in Florence till it was oven-heat, and then we came here, where it was fire-heat for a short time, though with cool nights comparatively, by means of which we lived, comparatively too. Now it is cool by day and night. You know these beautiful hills, the green rushing river which keeps them apart, the chestnut woods, the sheep-walks and goat-walks, the villages on the peaks of the mountains like wild eagles; the fresh, unworn, uncivilised, world-before-the-flood look of everything? If you don't know it, you ought to know it. Come and know it — do! We have a spare bedroom which opens its door of itself at the thought of you, and if you can trust yourself so far from home, try for our sakes. Come and look in our faces and learn us more by heart, and see whether we are not two friends. I am so very sorry for your increased anxiety about your sister. I scarcely know how to cheer you, or, rather, to attempt such a thing, but it did strike me that she was full of life when I saw her. It may be better with her than your fears, after all. If you would come to us, you would be here in two hours from Leghorn; and there's a telegraph at Leghorn — at Florence. Think of it, do. The Storys are at the top of the hill; you know Mr. and Mrs. Story. She and I go backward and forward on donkeyback to tea-drinking and gossiping at one another's houses, and our husbands hold the reins. Also Robert and I make excursions, he walking as slowly as he can to keep up with my donkey. When the donkey trots we are more equal. The other day we were walking, and I, attracted by a picturesque sort of ladder-bridge of loose planks thrown

across the river, ventured on it, without thinking of venturing. Robert held my hand. When we were in the middle the bridge swayed, rocked backwards and forwards, and it was difficult for either of us to keep footing. A gallant colonel who was following us went down upon his hands and knees and crept. In the meantime a peasant was assuring our admiring friends that the river was deep at that spot, and that four persons had been lost from the bridge. I was so sick with fright that I could scarcely stand when all was over, never having contemplated an heroic act. 'Why, what a courageous creature you are!' said our friends. So reputations are made, Mr. Chorley.

Yes, we are doing a little work, both of us. Robert is working at a volume of lyrics, of which I have seen but a few, and those seemed to me as fine as anything he has done. We neither of us show our work to one another till it is finished. An artist must, I fancy, either find or *make* a solitude to work in, if it is to be good work at all. This for the consolation of bachelors!

I am glad you like Mr. Powers's paper. You would have 'fretted' me terribly if you had not, for I liked it myself, knowing it to be an earnest opinion and expressive of the man. I had a very interesting letter from him the other day. He is devout in his art, and the simplest of men otherwise. . . .

Now, I will ask you to write to us. It is *you* who give us up, indeed. Will your sister accept our true regards and sympathies? I shall persist in hoping to see her a little stronger next spring — or summer, rather. May God bless you. I will set myself down, and Robert with me, as

Faithfully and affectionately yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Miss Mitford

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
August 20 and 21, 1853.

. . . We are enjoying the mountains here, riding the donkeys in the footsteps of the sheep, and eating strawberries and milk by basins full. The strawberries succeed one another, generation after generation, throughout the summer, through growing on different aspects of the hills. If a tree is felled in the forests strawberries spring up just as mushrooms might, and the peasants sell them for just nothing. Our little Penini is wild with happiness: he asks in his prayers that God would 'mate him dood and tate him on a dontey' (make him good and take him on a donkey), so resuming all aspiration for spiritual and worldly prosperity. Then our friends, Mr. and Mrs. Story, help the mountains to please us a good deal. He is the son of Judge Story, the biographer of his father, and, for himself, sculptor and poet; and she a sympathetic, graceful woman, fresh and innocent in face and thought. We go backwards and forwards to tea and talk at one another's houses. Last night they were our visitors, and your name came in among the Household Gods to make us as agreeable as might be. We were considering your expectations about Mr. Hawthorne. 'All right,' says Mr. Story, '*except the rare half hours*' (of eloquence). He represents Mr. Hawthorne as not silent only by shyness, but by nature and inaptitude. He is a man, it seems, who talks wholly and exclusively with the pen, and who does not open out socially with his most intimate friends any more than with strangers. It isn't his *way* to converse. That has been a characteristic of some men of genius before him, you know, but you will be nevertheless disappointed, very surely. Also, Mr. Story does not imagine that you will get anything from him on the subject of the 'manifestations.' You have read the

'Blithedale Romance,' and are aware of his opinion expressed there? He evidently recognised them as a sort of scurvy spirits, good to be slighted, because of their disreputableness. By the way, I heard read the other day a very interesting letter from Paris, from Mr. Appleton, Longfellow's brother-in-law, who is said to be a man of considerable ability, and who is giving himself wholly just now to the investigation of this spirit-subject, termed by him the 'sublimest conundrum ever given to the world for guessing.' He appears still in doubt whether the intelligence is external, or whether the phenomena are not produced by an *unconscious projection in the medium of a second personality accompanied with clairvoyance, and attended by physical manifestations*. This seems to me to double the difficulty; yet the idea is entertained as a doubtful sort of hypothesis by such men as Sir Edward Lytton and others. *Imposture* is absolutely out of the question, be certain, as an ultimate solution, and a greater proof of credulity can scarcely be given than a belief in imposture as things are at present. But I was going to tell you Mr. Appleton has a young American friend in Paris, who, 'besides being a very sweet girl,' says he, 'is a strong medium.' By Lamartine's desire he took her to the poet's house; 'all the phenomena were reproduced, and everybody present convinced,' Lamartine himself 'in ecstasies.' Among other spirits came Henry Clay, who said, 'J'aime Lamartine.' We shall have it in the next volume of biography. Louis Napoleon gets oracles from the 'raps,' and it is said that the Czar does the same,—your Emperor, certainly,—and the King of Holland is allowing the subject to absorb him. 'Dying out! dying out!' Our accounts from New York are very different, but unbelieving persons are apt to stop their ears and exclaim, 'We hear nothing now.' On one occasion the Hebrew Professor at New York was addressed in Hebrew to his astonishment.

Well, I don't believe, with all my credulity, in poets

being perfected at universities. What can be more absurd than this proposition of 'finishing' Alexander Smith at Oxford or Cambridge? We don't know how to deal with literary genius in England, certainly. We are apt to treat poets (when we condescend to treat them at all) as over-masculine papas do babies; and Monckton Milnes was accused of only touching his in order to poke out its eyes, for instance. Why not put this new poet in a public library? There are such situations even among us, and something of the kind was done for Patmore. The very judgment Tennyson gave of him, *in the very words*, we had given here — 'fancy, not imagination.' Also, imagery in excess; thought in deficiency. Still, the new poet is a true poet, and the defects obvious in him may be summed up in *youth* simply. Let us wait and see. I have read him only in extracts, such as the reviews give, and such as a friend helped me to by good-natured MS. It is extraordinary to me that with his amount of development, as far as I understand it, he has met with so much rapid recognition. Tell me if you have read 'Queechy,' the American book — novel — by Elizabeth Wetherell? I think it very clever and characteristic. Mrs. Beecher Stowe scarcely exceeds it, after all the trumpets. We are about to have a visit from Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's only son — only child now. Did I tell you that he was a poet — yes, and of an unquestionable faculty. I expect much from him one day, when he shakes himself clear of the poetical influences of the age, which he will have strength to do presently. He thinks as well as sees, and that is good. . . .

Oh yes! I like Mr. Kingsley. I am glad he spoke kindly of *us*, because really I like him and admire him. Few people have struck me as much as he did last year in England. 'Manly,' do you say? But I am not very fond of praising men by calling them *manly*. I hate and detest a masculine man. *Humanly* bold, brave, true, direct, Mr. Kingsley is — a moral cordiality and an original intellect uniting in him.

I did not see *her* and the children, but I hope we shall be in better fortune next time.

Since I began this letter the Storys and ourselves have had a grand donkey-excursion to a village called Benabbia, and the cross above it on the mountain-peak. We returned in the dark, and were in some danger of tumbling down various precipices; but the scenery was exquisite — past speaking of for beauty. Oh those jagged mountains, rolled together like pre-Adamite beasts, and setting their teeth against the sky! It was wonderful. You may as well guess at a lion by a lady's lapdog as at Nature by what you see in England. All honour to England, lanes and meadow-land, notwithstanding; to the great trees above all. Will you write to me sooner? Will you give me the details of yourself? Will you love me?

Your most affectionate

BA.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
August 30, [1853].

Dearest Fanny, — On your principle that 'there's too much to say,' I ought not to think of writing to you these three months; you have pleased me and made me grateful to such an extremity by your most pretty and graceful illustrative outlines. The death-bed I admire particularly; the attitudes are very expressive, and the open window helps the sentiment. What am I to say for your kindness in holding a torch of this kind (perfumed for the 'nobilities') between the wind and my poems? Thank you, thank you. And when that's said, I ought to stop short and beg you, dear Fanny, not to waste yourself in more labour of this kind, seeing that I am accursed and that nothing is to be done with my books and me, as far as my public is concerned. Why not get up a book of your own, a collection of 'outlines' illustrative of everybody's poems, which would

stand well on its own feet and make a circle for itself? Think of *that* rather. For my part, there's nothing to be done with me, as I said; that is, there's nothing to be done with my publishers, who just do as they like with my books, and don't like to do much good for *me* with them, whatever they may do for themselves. I am misanthropical in respect to the booksellers. They manage one as they please, and not at all to please one. I have no more to say to the fate of my books than you have — and not much more to pocket. This third edition, for instance, which should have been out four or five months ago, they are keeping, I suppose, for the millennium, encouraged probably by the spiritual manifestations; and *my* personal manifestations meanwhile have as much weight with them as facts have with Faraday, or the theory of fair play with the London 'Athenæum.' I am sick of it all, indeed. I look down on it all as the epicurean gods do on the world without putting out a finger to save an empire; perhaps because they can't. Long live the ——, who are kings of us. It's the best thing possible, I conclude, in this best of possible social economies, though for ourselves individually it may not be a very good thing: not precisely what we should choose. Think of the separate book of outlines. Seriously, Robert and I recommend you to consider it. You might make a book for drawing-room tables which would be generally acceptable if not too expensive. And Mr. Spicer is bringing me more? How kind of you. And when is he coming? Scarcely could anyone come as a stranger whom I desire more to see, and I do hope he will bring me facts and fantasies too on the great subject which is interesting me so deeply. His book of 'Sights and Sounds' we have read, but the new book has not penetrated to us. 'Sights and Sounds' is very curious, and the authenticity of its facts has been confirmed to me by various testimonies, but the author is too clever for his position; I mean too full of flash and wit. There's an air of levity, and of effective writing, without which the book

would have been more impressive and convincing; don't you think so? And here we get to the heart of most of the difficulties of the subject. Why do we make no quicker advances, do you say? Why are our communications chiefly trivial? Why, but because we ourselves are trivial, and don't bring serious souls and concentrated attentions and holy aspirations to the spirits who are waiting for these things? Spirit comes to spirit by affinity, says Swedenborg; but our cousinship is not with the high and noble. We try experiments from curiosity, just as children play with the loadstone; our ducks swim, but they don't get beyond that, and *won't*, unless we do better. To prove what I say, consider what you say yourself, that you couldn't manage to draw the same persons together again (these very persons being persuaded of the verity of the spiritual communications they were in reach of) on account of the difficulties of the London season. Difficulties of the London season! The inconsequence of human nature is more wonderful to me than the ingress of any spirits could be. This instance is scarcely credible. . . .

I had a letter the other day from Mr. Chorley, and he was chivalrous enough (I call it real chivalry in his state of opinion) to deliver to me a message from Mr. Westland Marston, whom he met at Folkestone, and who kindly proposes to write a full account to me of his own spiritual experiences, having heard from you that they were likely to interest me; I mean that I was interested in the whole subject. Will you tell him from me that I shall be most thankful for anything he will vouchsafe to write to me, and will you give him my address? I don't know where to find him, and Mr. Chorley is on the Continent wandering. I have seen nothing for myself, but I am a believer upon testimony; and a stream of Americans running through Florence, and generally making way to us, the testimony has been various and strong. Interested in the subject! Who can be uninterested in the subject? Even Robert is

interested, who professes to be a sceptic, an infidel indeed (though I can swear to having seen him considerably shaken more than once), and who promises never to believe till he has experience by his own senses. Isn't it hard on me that I can't draw a spirit into our circle and convince him? He would give much, he says, to find it true. . . .

Here an end. Write soon and write much.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B. (called Ba).

Our child was gathering box leaves in a hedge the other day (wherever we have a hedge, it's box, I would have you to understand), and pulled a yellow flower by mistake. Down he flung it as if it stung him. 'Ah, brutto! Colore Tedesco!' Think of that baby!

To Mr. Westwood

Casa Tolomei, Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
September [1853].

As to Patmore's new volume of poems, my husband and I had the pleasure of reading in MS. the poem which gives its title to the book. He has a great deal of thought and poetry in him. Alexander Smith I know by copious extracts in reviews, and by some MSS. once sent to us by friends and readers. Judging from those he must be set down as a true poet in opulence of imagery, but defective, so far (he is said to be very young) in the intellectual part of poetry. His images are flowers thrown to him by the gods, beautiful and fragrant, but having no root either in Enna or Olympus. There's no unity and holding together, no reality properly so called, no thinking of any kind. I hear that Alfred Tennyson says of him: 'He has fancy without imagination.' Still, it is difficult to say at the dawn what may be written at noon. Certainly he is very rich and full of colour; nothing is more surprising to me than his

favourable reception with the critics. I should have thought that his very merits would be against him.

If you can read novels, and you have too much sense not to be fond of them, read 'Villette.' The scene of the greater part of it is in Belgium, and I think it a strong book. 'Ruth,' too, by Mrs. Gaskell, the author of 'Mary Barton,' has pleased me very much. Do you know the French novels? there's passion and power for you, if you like such things. Balzac convinced me that the French language was malleable into poetry. We are behindhand here in books, and elderly ones seem young to us. For instance, we have not caught sight yet of 'Moore's Life,' the extracts from which are unpropitious, I think. I had a fancy, I cannot tell you how it grew, that Moore, though an artificial, therefore inferior, poet, was a most brilliant letter-writer. His letters are disappointing, and his mean clinging to the aristocracy still more so.

I wish you could suddenly walk into this valley, which seems to have been made by the flashing scimitar of the river that cuts through the mountain. Ah! you in England, and in Belgium still less, do not know what scenery is, what Nature is when she is natural. You could as soon guess at a tiger from the cat on the hearthstone. You do not know; but, being a poet, you can dream. You have divine insights, as we all have, of heaven, all of us with whom the mortal mind does not cake and obstruct into cecity. No, no, no. I protest against anything I have not reprinted. The Prometheus poems bear the mark of their time, which was one of greenness and immaturity. Indeed, the responsibility for what I *acknowledge* in print is hard enough to bear. Don't put another stick on the overloaded — *ass*, shall I say candidly?

To Mrs. Martin

Bagni di Lucca: October 5, [1853].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am delighted to have your letter at last, and should have come upon you like a storm in a day or two if you hadn't written, for really I began to be low in patience. Also, after having spent the summer here, we were about to turn our faces to Florence again, and it was necessary to my own satisfaction to let you know of our plans for the winter. To begin with those, then, we go to Florence, as I said, from hence, and after a week or two, or three or four as it may be, the briefer time if we let our house, we proceed to Rome for some months. You see we *must* visit Rome before we go northwards, and northwards we *must* go in the spring, so that the logic of events seems to secure Rome to us this time; otherwise I should still doubt of our going there, so often have we been on the verge and caught back. . . .

So you think that he[1] is looking 'less young than formerly,' and that 'we should all learn to hear and make such remarks with equanimity.' Now, once for all, let me tell you — confess to you — I never, if I live to be a hundred, should learn that learning. Death has the luminous side when we know how to look; but the rust of time, the touch of age, is hideous and revolting to me, and I never see it, by even a line's breadth, in the face of any I love, without pain and recoil of nature. I have a worse than womanly weakness about that class of subjects. Death is a face-to-face intimacy; age, a thickening of the mortal mask between souls. So I hate it; put it far from me. Why talk of age, when it's just an appearance, an accident, when we are all young in soul and heart? We don't say, one to another, 'You are freckled in the forehead to-day,' or 'There's a yellow shade in your complexion.' Leave those disagreeable

[1] Mr. George Barrett. The omitted passage describes an act of generosity by him to one of his younger brothers.

trifles. I, for my part, never felt younger. Did *you*, I wonder? To be sure not. Also, I have a gift in my eyes, I think, for scarcely ever does it strike me that anybody is altered, except my child, for instance, who certainly is larger than when he was born. When I went to England after five years' absence, everybody (save one) appeared to me younger than I was used to conceive of them, and of course I took for granted that I appeared to them in the same light. Be sure that it is highly moral to be young as long as possible. Women who throw up the game early (or even late) and wear dresses 'suitable to their years' (that is, as hideous as possible), are a disgrace to their sex, aren't they now? And women and men with statistical memories, who are always quoting centuries and the years thereof ('Do you remember in '20?' *As if anybody could*), are the pests of society. And, in short, and for my part, whatever honours of authorship may ever befall me, I hope I may be safe from the epithet which distinguishes the Venerable Bede.

Now, if I had written this from Paris, you would have cried out upon the frivolity I had picked up. Who would imagine that I had just finished a summer of mountain solitude, succeeding a winter's meditation on Swedenborg's philosophy, and that such fruit was of it all? By the way, tell me how it was that Paris did harm to Moore? Mentally, was it, and morally, or in the matter of the body? I have not seen the biography yet. Italy keeps us behind in new books. But the extracts given in newspapers displease me through the ignoble tone of 'doing honour to the lord,' which is anything but religious. Also, the letters seem somewhat less brilliant than I expected from Moore; but it must be, after all, a most entertaining book. Tell me if you have read Mrs. Gaskell's 'Ruth.' That's a novel which I much admire. It is strong and healthy at once, teaching a moral frightfully wanted in English society. Such an interesting letter I had from Mrs. Gaskell a few days ago — simple, worthy of 'Ruth.' By the way 'Ruth' is a great

advance on 'Mary Barton,' don't you think so? 'Villette,' too (Jane Eyre's), is very powerful.

Since we have been here we have had for a visitor (drawing the advantage from our spare room) Mr. Lytton, Sir Edward's only son, who is attaché at the Florence Legation at this time. He lost nothing from the test of house-intimacy with either of us — gained, in fact, much. Full of all sorts of good and nobleness he really is, and gifted with high faculties and given to the highest aspirations — not vulgar ambitions, understand — he will never be a great diplomatist, nor fancy himself an inch taller for being master of Knebworth.[1] Then he is somewhat dreamy and unpractical, we must confess; he won't do for drawing carts under any sort of discipline. Such a summer we have enjoyed here, free from burning heats and mosquitos — the two drawbacks of Italy — and in the heart of the most enchanting scenery. Mountains not too grand for exquisite verdure, and just kept from touching by the silver finger of a stream. I have been donkey-riding, and so has Wiedeman. I even went (to prove to you how well I am) the great excursion to Prato Fiorito, six miles there and six miles back, perpendicularly up and down. Oh, it almost slew me of course! I could not stir for days after. But who wouldn't see heaven and die? Such a vision of divine scenery, such as, in England, the best dreamers do not dream of! As we came near home I said to Mr. Lytton, who was on horseback, 'I am dying. How are you?' To which he answered, 'I thought a quarter of an hour ago I could not keep up to the end, but now I feel better.' This from a young man just one-and-twenty! He is delicate, to be sure, but still you may imagine that the day's work was not commonly fatiguing. The guides had to lead the horses and donkeys. It was like going up and down a wall, without the smoothness. No road except in the beds of

[1] Hardly a successful horoscope of the future Ambassador at Paris and Viceroy of India.

torrents. Robert pretended to be not tired, but, of course (as sensible people say of the turning tables), nobody believed a word of it. It was altogether a supernatural pretension, and very impertinent in these enlightened days.

Mr. and Mrs. Story were of our party. He is the son of Judge Story and full of all sorts of various talent. And she is one of those cultivated and graceful American women who take away the reproach of the national want of refinement. We have seen much of them throughout the summer. There has been a close communion of tea-drinking between the houses, and as we are all going to Rome together, this pleasure is not a past one. . . .

We still point to Paris. Ah! you disapprove of Paris, I see, but we must try the experiment. What I am afraid of is simply the climate. I doubt whether I shall stand two winters running as far north as Paris, but if I *can't*, we must come south again. Then I love Italy. Oh! if it were not for the distance between Italy and England, we should definitively settle here at once. We shall be in England, by the way, next summer for pleasure and business, having, or about to have, two books to see through the press. Not *prose*, Mr. Martin. I'm lost — devoted to the infernal gods of rhyming. 'It's my fate,' as a popular poet said when going to be married. . . .

(We go on Monday. Write to Florence for the next month.)

To Miss Browning

[Florence: autumn, 1853.]

My dearest Sarianna, — I shall not be able to write very much to-day, for Robert is in haste, and we are both overwhelmed with different engagements, the worst of which have been forced on me *maritally* rather than artistically by the portrait-sittings he of course has told you of. His own portrait, by Mr. Reade, I must be glad about, seeing that though it by no means gives his best expression, the face is

there, and it will be the best work extant on the same subject. I only wish that the artist had been satisfied with it, or taken my Penini in the second place instead of me, who am not wanted in canvas for art's sake, or for any other sake in the world. When gone from hence, may nobody think of me again, except when one or two may think perhaps how I loved them. . . .

Do you think much of the war? I hope all will be done on the part of the two western Powers honestly and directly; and then, may the best that can, come out of the worst that must be. The poor Italians catch like men in an agony at all these floating straws. We hear that the new Austrian Commandant has received instructions to hold no intercourse with members of the English and French Legations till further orders are received.

We have lived a disturbed life lately; too much coming and going even with agreeable people. There has been no time for work. In Rome it must be different, or we shall get on poorly with our books, I think. Robert seems, however, by his account, to be in an advanced state already. . . .

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Casa Guidi: Saturday [about October, 1853].

My dearest Isa,— . . . I was very sorry on returning from Lucca to find only Mr. Thompson's note and yours; but though we missed him at Florence we shall see him at Rome, I hope. There was also a card from Miss Lynch,[1] an American poetess (one of the ninety-and-nine muses), with a note of introduction from England. Do you hear of her at Rome? The 'Ninth Street' printed on her card leaves me in the infinite as far as conjectures of where she is go.

[1] Afterwards wife of Signor Carlo Botta, an Italian man of letters, with whom she returned to America and lived in New York.

So pleased I am to get back to Florence, and so little inclined to tumble out of my nest again; yet we *shall go to Rome* if some new obstacle does not arise. We have had no glimpse of the Tassinaris; they seem to have vanished from the scene. Florence is full of great people, so called, from England, and the *real sommités* are coming, such as Alfred Tennyson, and, with an interval, Dickens and Thackeray. The two latter go to Rome for the winter, I understand.

Do you say *Edward Lytton?* But he isn't Edward Lytton now — he is Robert. The two Edwards clashed inconveniently, and now he doesn't sign an Edward even by an initial; he has renounced the name, and is a Robert for evermore. I am glad to tell you that although he is delicate and excitable there seems to me no tendency to disease of any kind. Indeed, he is looking particularly well just now. He is full of sensibility, both intellectually and morally, which is scarcely favorable to health and long life; but in the long run, if people can run, they get over such a disadvantage. At this time he is about to publish a collection of poems. I think highly of his capabilities; and he is a great favorite with both of us for various excellent reasons. Did I tell you of his passing a fortnight with us at Lucca, and how sorry we were to lose him at last? Sir Edward either has just brought out, or is bringing out, a volume of poems of his own, called 'Cornflowers' (referring to the harvest time of maturity in which he produces them), and chiefly of a metaphysical character. His son, who has seen the manuscript, thinks them the best of his poems. 'My Novel' is certainly excellent. Did I tell you that I had seized and read it?

I shall get at Swedenborg in Rome, and get on with my readings. There are deep truths, in him, I cannot doubt, though I can't receive *everything*, which may be my fault. I would fain speak with a wise humility. We will talk on these things and the spirits. How that last subject attracts

me! It strikes me that we are on the verge of great developments of the spiritual nature, and that in a philosophical point of view (apart from ulterior ends) the facts are worthy of all admiration and meditation. If a spiritual influx, it is *mixed* — good and evil together. The fact of there being a mixture of evil justifies Swedenborg's philosophy (does it not?) without concluding against the movement generally. We were at the Pergola the other night, and heard the 'Trovatore,' Verdi's new work. Very passionate and dramatic, surely. The Storys are here on their way back to Rome. Oh, I mean to convert you, Isa! Is it true that the fever at Rome is still raging? Give my love to your dear invalid, who must be comforting you so much with her improvement. Penini is in a chronic state of packing up his desk to go to '*Bome*.' Robert's love with mine as ever. I can't write either legibly or otherwise than stupidly on this detestable paper, having never learnt to skate. Are we giving you too much trouble, dearest, kind Isa?

Your affectionate friend

E. B. B.

After a few weeks only at Florence the Brownings moved on to Rome, and there (at No. 43 Via Bocca di Leone) they passed the winter. Both were now actively engaged on their new volumes of poetry — Mr. Browning on his 'Men and Women,' Mrs. Browning on 'Aurora Leigh,' both of which were, however, still far from completion.

To Mrs. Jameson

Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: December 21, 1853.

My dearest Mona Nina, — I have been longer than I thought to be in Rome without writing to you, especially when I have a letter of yours for which to thank you. My fancy was to wait till I had seen Gerardine in her own home, and then to write to you, but I have called on her three times, and the three Fates have been at it each time to

prevent my getting in. Still, we have met *here*, and I would rather not wait any longer for whatever might be added to what I have seen and know already. . . .

Ah, dearest friend! you have heard how our first step into Rome was a fall, not into a catacomb but a fresh grave,[1] and how everything here has been slurred and blurred to us, and distorted from the grand antique associations. I protest to you I doubt whether I shall get over it, and whether I ever shall feel that this is Rome. The first day at the bed's head of that convulsed and dying child; and the next two, three, four weeks in great anxiety about his little sister, who was all but given up by the physicians; the English nurse horribly ill of the same fever, and another case in the house. It was not only sympathy. I was selfishly and intensely frightened for my own treasures; I wished myself at the end of the world with Robert and Penini twenty times a day. Rome has been very peculiarly unhealthy; and I heard a Monsignore observe the other morning that there would not be much truce to the fever till March came. Still, I begin to take breath again and be reasonable. Penini's cheeks are red as apples, and if we avoid the sun, and the wind, and the damp, and, above all, if God takes care of us, we shall do excellently. *I*, of course, am in a flourishing condition; walk out nearly every day and scarcely cough at all. Which isn't enough for me, you see. Dear friend, we have not set foot in the Vatican. Oh, barbarians!

But we have seen Mrs. Kemble, and I am as enchanted as I ought to be, and even, perhaps, a little more. She has been very kind and gracious to me; she was to have spent an evening with us three days since, but something intervened. I am much impressed by her as well as attracted to her. What a voice, what eyes, what eyelids full of utterance!

[1] This refers to the death of the infant child of the Storys, with whom Mr. and Mrs. Browning were on intimate terms of friendship, as the previous letters show.

Then we have had various visits from Mr. Thackeray and his daughters. 'She writes to me of Thackeray instead of Raffael, and she is at Rome'! But she *isn't* at Rome. There's the sadness of it. We got to Gibson's studio, which is close by, and saw his coloured Venus. I don't like her. She has come out of her cloud of the ideal, and to my eyes is not too decent. Then in the long and slender throat, in the turn of it, and the setting on of the head, you have rather a grisette than a goddess. 'Tis over pretty and *petite*, the colour adding, of course, to this effect. Crawford's studio (the American sculptor) was far more interesting to me than Gibson's. By the way, Mr. Page's portrait of Miss Cushman is really something wonderful — soul and body together. You can show nothing like it in England, take for granted. Indeed, the American artists consider themselves a little aggrieved when you call it as good as a Titian. '*Did* Titian ever produce anything like it?' said an admirer in my hearing. Critics wonder whether the colour will *stand*. It is a theory of this artist that time does not *tone*, and that Titian's pictures were painted as we see them. The consequence of which is that his (Page's) pictures are undertoned in the first instance, and if they change at all will turn black.[1] May all Boston rather turn black, which it may do one of these days by an eruption from the South, when 'Uncle Tomison' gets strong enough.

We have been to St. Peter's; we have stood in the Forum and seen the Colosseum. Penini says: 'The sun has tome out. I think God knows I want to go out to walk, and *so* He has sent the sun out.' There's a child who has faith enough to put us all to shame. A vision of angels wouldn't startle him in the least. When his poor little friend died, and we had to tell him, he inquired, fixing

[1] According to Mr. R. B. Browning, this is practically what has happened with Page's portrait of Robert Browning (now in Venice). The surface has become thick and waxy, and the portrait has almost disappeared.

on me those earnest blue eyes, 'Did papa *see* the angels when they took away Joe?' And when I answered 'No' (for I never try to deceive him by picturesque fictions, I should not dare, I tell him simply what I believe myself), 'Then did Joe *go up* by himself?' In a moment there was a burst of cries and sobs. The other day he asked me if I thought *Joe had seen the Dute of Wellyton.* He has a medal of the Duke of Wellington, which put the name into his head. By-the-bye, Robert yesterday, in a burst of national vanity, informed the child that this was the man who beat Napoleon. 'Then I sint he a velly naughty man. What! he beat Napoleon *wiz a stit?*' (with a stick). Imagine how I laughed, and how Robert himself couldn't help laughing. So, the seraphs judge our glories!

If you have seen Sir David Brewster lately I should like to know whether he has had more experience concerning the tables, and has modified his conclusions in any respect. I myself am convinced as I can be of any fact, that there is an *external intelligence;* the little I have seen is conclusive to me. And this makes me more anxious that the subject should be examined with common fairness by learned persons. Only the learned won't learn — that's the worst of them. Their hands are too full to gather simples. It seems to me a new development of law in the human constitution, which has worked before in exceptional cases, but now works in general.

Dearest friend, I do not speak of your own anxious watch and tender grief, but think of them deeply. Believe that I love you always and in all truth.

Your

E. B. B.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: December 27, [1853].

My dearest Fanny, — I can't judge of your 'obstacles,' of course, but as to your being snowed up on the road or

otherwise impeded between Rome and Civita (Castellana or Vecchia), there's certainly not room for even a dream of it. There has been beautiful weather here ever since we came, except for exacting invalids. I, for instance, have been kept in the house for a fortnight or more (till Christmas Day, when I was able to get to St. Peter's) by tramontana; but there has been sun on *most* days of cold, and nothing has been *severe* as cold. The hard weather came in November, before we arrived. I was out yesterday, and may be to-day, perhaps. 'Judge ye!' . . .

You bid me write. But to what end, if you are here on New Year's Day? There's not time for a letter.

And at first I intended not to write, till beginning to consider how, as you are not actually of the race of Medes and Persians, you might possibly so modify your plans as to be able to receive these lines. Oh, a provoking person or persons you are, since you and Ellen Heaton are plural henceforth! No, I won't include her. *You* are *singular*, by your own confession, on this occasion. And, instead of Christmas solemnisations, I shall take to reading the Commination Service over you if you stay any longer at Florence because of the impracticable, snowed-up roads around Rome. You really might as well object to coming on account of the heat! . . .

I thank you very much for meaning to bring my goods for me. I wish I could have seen your pictures before they took to themselves golden wings and fled away. Is it true, really, that you think to exhibit in London Penini's portrait at the piano, as Sophie Eckley tells me? I shall like to hear that you succeed in that.

I see *her* every day almost, if not quite. Nobody is like her. And there are quantities of people here to choose from. I have not taken heart and 'an evening for reception' yet, but we have had '*squeezes*' of more or less stringency. Miss Ogle is here — and her family, of course, for she is young — the author of 'A Lost Love,' that very

pretty book; and she is natural and pleasing. Do you know Lady Oswald, and her daughter and son? She is Lady Elgin's sister-in-law, and brought a letter to me from Lady Augusta Bruce. Then the Marshalls found us out through Mr. De Vere (*her* cousin), and in the name of Alfred Tennyson (their intimate friend). Mrs. Marshall was a Miss Spring Rice, and is very refined in all senses. Refinement expresses the whole woman. Yes, there are some nice people here — nice people; it's the word. Nobody as near to me as Mr. Page, whom we often see, I am happy to say, and who has just presented the world (only *that* is generally said of the lady) with a *son*, and is on the point of presenting said world with a Venus. *Will* you come to see? I wonder. . . .

I want you here to see a portrait taken of me in chalks by Miss Fox. I said 'No' to her in London, which was my sole reason for saying 'Yes' to her in Rome, when she asked me for a patient — or victim. She draws well, and has been very successful with the hair at least. For the likeness you shall judge for yourself. She comes here for an hour in the morning to execute me, and I'm as well as can be expected under it. . . .

May God bless you, dearest Fanny. What Christmas wishes warm from the heart by heartfuls I throw at you! And say to Ellen Heaton, with cordial love, that I thank her much for her kind letter, and remember her in all affectionate wishes made for friends. I shall write to Mr. Ruskin. *Don't* get this letter, I say.

Your

E. B. B.

Robert's love, and *Penini's*. If 'Fanny' strikes you, 'Madame Bovary' will thunder-strike you.

To Miss Mitford

43 Via di Leone, Rome: January 7, 18[54].

It is long, my ever dearest Miss Mitford, since I wrote to you last, but since we came to Rome we have had troubles, out of the deep pit of which I was unwilling to write to you, lest the shadows of it should cleave as blots to my pen. Then one day followed another, and one day's work was laid on another's shoulders. Well, we are all well, to begin with, and have been well; our troubles came to us through sympathy entirely. A most exquisite journey of eight days we had from Florence to Rome, seeing the great monastery and triple church of Assisi and the wonderful Terni by the way — that passion of the waters which makes the human heart seem so still. In the highest spirits we entered Rome, Robert and Penini singing actually; for the child was radiant and flushed with the continual change of air and scene, and he had an excellent scheme about 'tissing the Pope's foot,' to prevent his taking away 'mine gun,' somebody having told him that such dangerous weapons were not allowed by the Roman police. You remember my telling you of our friends the Storys — how they and their two children helped to make the summer go pleasantly at the baths of Lucca? They had taken an apartment for us in Rome, so that we arrived in comfort to lighted fires and lamps as if coming home, and we had a glimpse of their smiling faces that evening. In the morning, before breakfast, little Edith was brought over to us by the manservant with a message — 'The boy was in convulsions; there was danger.' We hurried to the house, of course, leaving Edith with Wilson. Too true! All that first day was spent beside a death-bed; for the child never rallied, never opened his eyes in consciousness, and by eight in the evening he was gone. In the meanwhile, Edith was taken ill at our house — could not be moved, said the physicians.

We had no room for her, but a friend of the Storys on the floor immediately below — Mr. Page, the artist — took her in and put her to bed. Gastric fever, with a tendency to the brain, and within two days her life was almost despaired of; exactly the same malady as her brother's. Also the English nurse was apparently dying at the Storys' house, and Emma Page, the artist's youngest daughter, sickened with the same symptoms. Now you will not wonder that, after the first absorbing flow of sympathy, I fell into a selfish human panic about my child. Oh, I 'lost my head,' said Robert; and if I *could* have caught him up in my arms and run to the ends of the world, the hooting after me of all Rome could not have stopped me. I wished — how I wished! — for the wings of a dove, or any unclean bird, to fly away with him to be at peace. But there was no possibility but to stay; also the physicians assured me solemnly that there was no contagion possible, otherwise I would have at least sent him from us to another house. To pass over this dreary time, I will tell you at once that the three patients recovered; only in poor little Edith's case Roman fever followed the gastric, and has persisted so, ever since, in periodical recurrence, that she is very pale and thin. Roman fever is not dangerous to life — simple fever and ague — but it is exhausting if not cut off, and the quinine fails sometimes. For three or four days now she has been free from the symptoms, and we are beginning to hope. Now you will understand at once what ghastly flakes of death have changed the sense of Rome to me. The first day by a death-bed! The first drive out to the cemetery, where poor little Joe is laid close to Shelley's heart (*Cor cordium*, says the epitaph), and where the mother insisted on going when she and I went out in the carriage together. I am horribly weak about such things. I can't look on the earth-side of death; I flinch from corpses and graves, and never meet a common funeral without a sort of horror. When I look deathwards I look *over* death, and

upwards, or I can't look that way at all. So that it was a struggle with me to sit upright in that carriage in which the poor stricken mother sate so calmly — not to drop from the seat, which would have been worse than absurd of me. Well, all this has blackened Rome to me. I can't think about the Cæsars in the old strain of thought; the antique words get muddled and blurred with warm dashes of modern, every-day tears and fresh grave-clay. Rome is spoiled to me — there's the truth. Still, one lives through one's associations when not too strong, and I have arrived at almost enjoying some things — the climate, for instance, which, though perilous to the general health, agrees particularly with me, and the sight of the blue sky floating like a sea-tide through the great gaps and rifts of ruins. We read in the papers of a tremendously cold winter in England and elsewhere, while I am able on most days to walk out as in an English summer, and while we are all forced to take precautions against the sun. Also Robert is well, and our child has not dropped a single rose-leaf from his radiant cheeks. We are very comfortably settled in rooms turned to the sun, and do work and play by turns — having almost too many visitors — hear excellent music at Mrs. Sartoris's (Adelaide Kemble) once or twice a week, and have Fanny Kemble to come and talk to us with the doors shut, we three together. This is pleasant. I like her decidedly. If anybody wants small-talk by handfuls of glittering dust swept out of salons, here's Mr. Thackeray besides; and if anybody wants a snow-man to match Southey's snow-woman (see 'Thalaba'), here's Mr. Lockhart, who, in complexion, hair, conversation, and manners, might have been made out of one of your English '*drifts*' — 'sixteen feet deep in some places,' says Galignani. Also, here's your friend *V.* — Mrs. Archer Clive.[1] We were at her house the other evening. She seems good-natured, but what a very peculiar person as to looks, and even voice and general

[1] Author of 'IX. Poems, by V.' (1840).

bearing; and what a peculiar unconsciousness of peculiarity. I do not know her much. I go out very little in the evening, both from fear of the night air and from disinclination to stir. Mr. Page, our neighbour downstairs, pleases me much, and you ought to know more of him in England, for his portraits are like Titian's — flesh, blood, and soul. I never saw such portraits from a living hand. He professes to have discovered secrets, and plainly *knows* them, from his wonderful effects of colour on canvas — not merely in words. His portrait of Miss Cushman is a miracle. Gibson's famous painted Venus is very pretty — that's my criticism. Yes, I will say besides that I have seldom, if ever, seen so indecent a statue. The colouring with an approximation to flesh tints produces that effect, to my apprehension. I don't like this statue-colouring — no, not at all.

Dearest Miss Mitford, will you write to me? I don't ask for a long letter, but a letter — a letter. And I entreat you not to *prepay*. Among other disadvantages, that prepaying tendency of yours may lose me a letter one day. I want much to hear how you are bearing the winter — how you are. Give me details about your dear self.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mr. Westwood

43 Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: February 2, [1854].

Thank you, my dear Mr. Westwood, for your kind defence of me against the stupid, blind, cur-dog backbiting of the American writer. I will tell you. Three weeks ago I had a letter from my brother, apprising me of what had been said, and pressing on me the propriety of a contradiction in form. Said I in reply: 'When you marry a wife, George, take her from the class of those who have never printed a book, if this thing vexes you. A woman in a crowd can't help the pushing up against her of dirty coats; happy if somebody in boots does not tread upon her toes!'

Words to that effect, I said. I really could not do the American the honour of sitting down at the table with him to say: 'Sir, you are considerably mistaken.' He was not only mistaken, you see, but so stupid and self-willed in his mistake, so determined to make a system of it, that he was too disreputable to set right. Also of the tendency of one's writings one's readers are the best judges. I don't profess to write a religious commentary on my writings. I am content to stand by the obvious meaning of what I have written, according to the common sense of the general reader.

The tendency of my writings to Swedenborgianism has been observed by others, though I had read Swedenborg, when I wrote most of them, as little as the American editor of 'Robert Hall' can have done, and less can't be certainly. Otherwise, the said editor would have known that the central doctrine of Swedenborgianism being the Godhead of Jesus Christ, no Unitarian, liberal or unliberal, could have produced works Swedenborgian in character, and that William and Mary Howitt being Unitarian (which I believe they are) couldn't have a tendency at the same time to Swedenborgianism, unless it should be possible for them to be bolt upright with a leaning to the floor. I speak to a wise man. Judge what I say. For my own part I have thought freely on most subjects, and upon the state of the Churches among others, but never at any point of my life, and now, thank God, least of all, have I felt myself drawn towards Unitarian opinions. I should throw up revelation altogether if I ceased to recognise Christ as divine. Sectarianism I do not like, even in the form of a State Church, and the Athanasian way of stating opinions, between a scholastic paradox and a curse, is particularly distasteful to me. But I hold to Christ's invisible Church as referred to in Scripture, and to the Saviour's humanity and divinity as they seem to me conspicuous in Scripture, and so you have done me justice and the American has done me injustice. . . .

Well, I have seen your Mrs. Brotherton, only once, though, because she can't come to see me at all, and lives too far for me to go in the winter weather. I shall see more of her presently, I hope, and in the meantime she is very generous to me, and sends me violets, and notes that are better, and we have a great sympathy on the spiritual subjects which set you so in a passion. What do I say? She sends me Greek (of which she does not know a single character), written by her, or rather *through* her; mystical Greek, from a spirit-world, produced by her hands, she herself not knowing what she writes. The character is beautifully written, and the separate words are generally correct — such words as 'Christ,' 'God,' 'tears,' 'blood,' 'tempest,' 'sea,' 'thunder,' 'calm,' 'morning,' 'sun,' 'joy.' No grammatical construction hitherto, but a significant sort of grouping of the separate words, as if the meaning were struggling out into coherence. My idea is that she is being exercised in the language, in the *character*, in order to fuller expression hereafter. Well, you would have us snowed upon with poppies till we sleep and forget these things. I, on the contrary, would have our eyes wide open, our senses 'all attentive,' our souls lifted in reverential expectation. Every *fact* is a word of God, and I call it irreligious to say, 'I will deny this because it displeases me.' 'I will look away from that because it will do me harm.' Why be afraid of the *truth?* God is in the truth, and He is called also Love. The evil results of certain experiences of this class result mainly from the superstitious and distorted views held by most people concerning the spiritual world. We have to learn — we in the body — that Death does not teach all things. Death is simply an accident. Foolish Jack Smith who died on Monday, is on Tuesday still foolish Jack Smith. If people who on Monday scorned his opinions prudently, will on Tuesday receive his least words as oracles, they very naturally may go mad, or at least do something as foolish as their inspirer is. Also, it is no argument against any subject, that it drives people mad who suffer themselves to be

absorbed in it. That would be an argument against all religion, and all love, by your leave. Ask the Commissioners of Lunacy; knock at the door of mad-houses in general, and inquire what two causes act almost universally in filling them. Answer — love and religion. The common objection of the degradation of knocking with the leg of the table, and the ridicule of the position for a spirit, &c., &c., I don't enter into at all. Twice I have been present at table-experiments, and each time I was deeply impressed — impressed, there's the word for it! The panting and shivering of that dead dumb wood, the human emotion conveyed through it — by what? had to me a greater significance than the St. Peter's of this Rome. O poet! do you not know that poetry is not confined to the clipped alleys, no, nor to the blue tops of 'Parnassus hill?' Poetry is where we live and have our being — wherever God works and man understands. Hein! . . . if you are in a dungeon and a friend knocks through the outer wall, spelling out by knocks the words you comprehend; you don't think the worse of the friend standing in the sun who remembers you. He is not degraded by it, you rather think. Now apply this. Certainly, there is a reaction from the materialism of the age, and this is certainly well, in my mind, but then there is something more than this, more than a mere human reaction, I believe. I have not the power of writing myself at all, though I have felt the pencil turn in my hand — a peculiar spiral motion like the turning of the tables, and independent of volition, but the power is not with me strong enough to make words or letters even.

We see a good deal of Fanny Kemble, a noble creature, and hear her sister sing — Mrs. Sartoris. Do admit a little society. It is good for soul and body, and on the Continent it is easy to get a handful of society without paying too dear for it. That, I think, is an advantage of continental life.

To Miss Mitford

43 Via Bocca di Leone, Rome: March 19, 1854.

My dearest Miss Mitford, — Your letter made my heart ache. It is sad, sad indeed, that you should have had this renewed cold just as you appeared to be rallying a little from previous shocks, and I know how depressing and enfeebling a malady the influenza is. It's the vulture finishing the work of the wolf. I pray God that, having battled through this last attack, you may be gradually strengthened and relieved by the incoming of the spring (though an English spring makes one shiver to think of generally), and with the summer come out into the garden, to sit in a chair and be shone upon, dear, dear friend. I shall be in England then, and get down to see you this time, and I tenderly hold to the dear hope of seeing you smile again, and hearing you talk in the old way. . . .

We see a good deal of the Kembles here, and like them both, especially the Fanny, who is looking magnificent still, with her black hair and radiant smile. A very noble creature, indeed. Somewhat unelastic, unpliant to the eye, attached to the old modes of thought and convention, but noble in quality and defects; I like her much. She thinks me credulous and full of dreams, but does not despise me for that reason, which is good and tolerant of her, and pleasant, too, for I should not be quite easy under her contempt. Mrs. Sartoris is genial and generous, her milk has had time to stand to cream, in her happy family relations. The Sartoris's house has the best society at Rome, and exquisite music, of course. We met Lockhart there, and my husband sees a good deal of him — more than I do, because of the access of cold weather lately which has kept me at home chiefly. Robert went down to the seaside in a day's excursion with him and the Sartoris's; and, I hear, found favor in his sight. Said the critic: 'I like Browning, he isn't at all like

a damned literary man.' That's a compliment, I believe, according to your dictionary. It made me laugh and think of you directly. I am afraid Lockhart's health is in a bad state; he looks very ill, and every now and then his strength seems to fail. Robert has been sitting for his picture to Fisher, the English artist, who painted Mr. Kenyon and Landor; you remember those pictures in Mr. Kenyon's house? Landor's was praised much by Southey. Well, he has painted Robert, and it is an admirable likeness.[1] The expression is an exceptional expression, but highly characteristic; it is one of Fisher's best works. Now he is about our Wiedeman, and if he succeeds as well in painting angels as men, will do something beautiful with that seraphic face. You are to understand that these works are done by the artist *for* the artist. Oh, we couldn't afford to have such a luxury as a portrait done for us. But I am pleased to have a good likeness of each of my treasures *extant* in the possession of somebody. Robert's will, of course, be eminently saleable, and Wiedeman's too, perhaps, for the beauty's sake, with those blue far-reaching eyes, and that innocent angel face emplumed in the golden ringlets! Somebody told me yesterday that she never had known, in a long experience of children, so attractive a child. He is so full of sweetness and vivacity together, of imagination and grace. A poetical child really, and in the best sense. Such a piece of innocence and simplicity with it all, too! A child you couldn't lie to if you tried. I had a fit of remorse for telling him the history of Jack and the Beanstalk, when he turned his earnest eyes up to me at the end and said, 'I think, if Jack went up so high, he must have seen God.'

To see those two works through the press must be a fatigue to you in your present weak state, dearest friend, and I keep wishing vainly I could be of use to you in the matter of the proof sheets. I might, you know, if I were in

[1] This portrait is now in possession of Mr. R. B. Browning at Venice.

England. I do some work myself, but doubt much whether I shall be ready for the printers by July; no, indeed, it is clear I shall not. If Robert is, it will be well. Doesn't it surprise you that Alexander Smith should be already in a third edition? I can't make it out for my part. I 'give it up' as is my way with riddles. He is both too bad and too good to explain this phenomenon, which is harder to me than any implied in the turning tables or involuntary writing. By the way, a lady whom I know here *writes Greek* without knowing or having ever known a single letter of it. The unbelievers writhe under it.

Oh, I have been reading poor Haydon's biography. There is tragedy! The pain of it one can hardly shake off. Surely, surely, wrong was done somewhere, when the worst is admitted of Haydon. For himself, looking forward beyond the grave, I seem to understand that all things when most bitter worked ultimate good to him, for that sublime arrogance of his would have been fatal perhaps to the moral nature if developed further by success. But for the nation we had our duties, and we should not suffer our teachers and originators to sink thus. It is a book written in blood of the heart. Poor Haydon!

May God bless you, my dear friend! I think of you and love you dearly, Robert's love, put to mine, and Penini's love put to Robert's. I give away Penini's love as I please just now.

Your ever affectionate
E. B. B.

Send my bulletins; only *two lines* if you will.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: about March, 1854.]

My dearest Sarianna, — We are all well, and so is the weather, which is diviner. We sit with the windows wide open, and find it almost too warm, and to-day Robert and

I have been wandering under the trees of the Pincio and looking to the Monte Marino pine. Let the best come, I don't like Rome, I never shall; and as they have put into the English newspapers that I don't, I might as well acknowledge the barbarism. Very glad I shall be to see you and Paris, even though my beloved Florence shall be left behind. Dearest Sarianna, after a short rest at Paris, we go on to London for the printing of Robert's book (mine won't be ready till later in the year), and for the sight of some dear English faces while the weather shall admit of it, before we settle for the winter in France. Well, you will go with us to England, won't you? The dear nonno[1] will spare you to go with us? It will do you good, and it will do us good, certainly.

I quite agree with you that there's no situation like the Champs Elysées — really, there is scarcely anything like it in Europe, if you put away Venice — for a situation in a city.

The worst of the Champs Elysées is that it is out of the way, and expensive on the point of carriages when you can't walk far. People tell you, too, that the air is sharper at the end of the avenue; yet the sun is so brilliant as to make amends for the disadvantage, if it exists. Then you pay more for houses on account of the concourse of English. And what if I object a little to the English besides? If I do, the desirableness of the pure air and free walking for Penini counterbalances them.

The Thackeray girls have had the scarlatina at Naples, and have been very desolate, I fear, without a female servant or friend near them. They probably were indisposed towards Naples by their own illness (which was slight, however; the scarlet fever is always slight in Italy they say), and by their father's more serious attack, for I have heard very different accounts of the Neapolitan weather. Still, it has been an abnormal winter everywhere, and there are cold

[1] *I.e.* 'grandfather,' a name by which Mr. Browning, senior, is frequently referred to in these letters.

winds on that coast on certain months of the year always. Lockhart has gone away with the Duke of Wellington, who was in deep consideration how he should manage his funeral on the road. Robert was present when the question was mooted on the Duke's last evening. *Should* he send the body to England or bury it? Would it be delicate to ask Lockhart which he preferred? Somebody said: 'Suppose you were to ask what he would do with your body if you died yourself.' I am afraid poor Lockhart is really in a dangerous state of health, and that it would have been better if he had had something tenderer and more considerate than a dukedom travelling with him under his circumstances. He called upon us, and took a great fancy to Robert, I understand, as being 'not at all like a damned literary man.'

Penini is overwhelmed with attentions and gifts of all kinds, and generally acknowledged as the king of the children here. Mrs. Page, the wife of the distinguished American artist, gave a party in honor of him the other day. There was an immense cake inscribed '*Penini*' in sugar; and he sat at the head of the table and did the honors. You never saw a child so changed in point of shyness. He will go anywhere with anybody, and talk, and want none of us to back him. Wilson is only instructed not to come till it is 'velly late' to fetch him away. He talks to Fanny Kemble, who 'dashes' most people. 'I not aflaid of nossing,' says he, in his eloquent English. Mr. Fisher's cartoon of him is very pretty, but doesn't do him justice in the delicacy of the lower part of the face. Yet I can't complain of Mr. Fisher after the admirable likeness he has painted of Robert. It is really *satisfying* to me. You will see it in London. Oh, how cruel it is that we can't buy it, Sarianna; I have a sort of hope that Mr. Kenyon may — but zitto, zitto![1] Arabel will be very grateful to you for the drawings. . . .

[*Endorsed by Miss Browning, 'Part of a letter.'*]

[1] 'Hush, hush!'

The plans, thus confidently spoken of, for a visit to Paris and London in the summer of this year, did not attain fulfilment. The Brownings left Rome for Florence about the end of May, intending to stay there only a few weeks; but their arrangements were altered by letters received from England, and ultimately they remained in Florence until the summer of the following year. Whether for this reason, or because the poems were not, after all, ready for press, the printing of Mr. Browning's new volumes ('Men and Women') was also postponed, and they did not appear until 1855; while 'Aurora Leigh' was still a long way from completion.

To Miss Mitford

Rome: May 10, 1854.

My ever dearest Miss Mitford, — Your letter pained me to a degree which I will not pain you by expressing farther. Now, I do not write to press for another letter. On the contrary, I *entreat* you not to attempt to write a word to me with your own hand, until you can do so without effort and suffering. In the meanwhile, would it be impossible for K. to send me in one line some account of you? I don't mean to tease, but I should be very glad and thankful to have news of you though in the briefest manner, and if a letter were addressed to me at Poste Restante, Florence, it would reach me, as we rest there on our road to Paris and London. In any case I shall see you this summer, if it shall please God; and stay with you the half hour you allow, and kiss your dear hands and feel again, I hope, the brightness of your smile. As the green summer comes on you must be the better surely; if you can bear to lie out under the trees, the general health will rally and the local injury correct itself. You must have a strong, energetic vitality; and, after all, spinal disorders do not usually attack life, though they disable and overthrow. The pain you endure is the terrible thing. Has a local application

of chloroform been ever tried? I catch at straws, perhaps, with my unlearned hands, but it's the instinct of affection. While you suffer, my dear friend, the world is applauding you. I catch sight of stray advertisements and fragmentary notices of 'Atherton,' which seems to have been received everywhere with deserved claps of hands. This will not be comfort to you, perhaps; but you will feel the satisfaction which every workman feels in successful work. I think the edition of plays and poems has not yet appeared, and I suppose there will be nothing in *that* which can be new to us. 'Atherton' I thirst for, but the cup will be dry, I dare say, till I get to England, for new books even at Florence take waiting for far beyond all necessary bounds. We shall not stay long in Tuscany. We want to be in England late in June or very early in July, and some days belong to Paris as we pass, since Robert's family are resident there. To leave Rome will fill me with barbarian complacency. I don't pretend to have a rag of sentiment about Rome. It's a palimpsest Rome — a watering-place written over the antique — and I haven't taken to it as a poet should, I suppose; only let us speak the truth, above all things. I am strongly a creature of association, and the associations of the place have not been personally favorable to me. Among the rest my child, the light of my eyes, has been more unwell lately than I ever saw him in his life, and we were forced three times to call in a physician. The malady was not serious, it was just the result of the climate, relaxation of the stomach, &c., but the end is that he is looking a delicate, pale, little creature, he who was radiant with all the roses and stars of infancy but two months ago. The pleasantest days in Rome we have spent with the Kembles — the two sisters — who are charming and excellent, both of them, in different ways; and certainly they have given us some exquisite hours on the Campagna, upon picnic excursions, they and certain of their friends — for instance, M. Ampère, the member of the French Institute, who is witty and agreeable; M. Gorze, the Austrian Minister, also an

agreeable man; and Mr. Lyons, the son of Sir Edmund, &c. The talk was almost too brilliant for the sentiment of the scenery, but it harmonised entirely with the mayonnaise and champagne. I should mention, too, Miss Hosmer (but she is better than a talker), the young American sculptress, who is a great pet of mine and of Robert's, and who emancipates the eccentric life of a perfectly 'emancipated female' from all shadow of blame by the purity of hers. She lives here all alone (at twenty-two); dines and breakfasts at the *cafés* precisely as a young man would; works from six o'clock in the morning till night, as a great artist must, and this with an absence of pretension and simplicity of manners which accord rather with the childish dimples in her rosy cheeks than with her broad forehead and high aims. The Archer Clives have been to Naples, but have returned for a time. Mr. Lockhart, who went to England with the Duke of Wellington (the same prepared to bury him on the road), writes to Mrs. Sartoris that he has grown much better under the influence of the native beef and beer. To do him justice he looked, when here, innocent of the recollection even of either. I wonder if you have seen Mrs. Howe's poems, lately out, called 'Passion Flowers.' They were sent to me by an American friend but were intercepted *en route*, so that I have not set eyes on them yet, but one or two persons, not particularly reliable as critics, have praised them to me. She is the wife of Dr. Howe, the deaf and dumb philanthropist, and herself neither deaf nor dumb (very much the contrary) I understand — a handsome woman and brilliant in society. I gossip on to you, dearest dear Miss Mitford, as if you were in gossiping humour. Believe that my tender thoughts, deeper than any said, are with you always.

Robert's love with that of your attached

Ba.

We go on the 22nd of this month. You have seen Mr. Chorley's book, I daresay, which I should like much to see.

To Miss Browning

Casa Guidi: Thursday, [end of May 1854].

My dearest Sarianna, — I am delighted to say that we have arrived, and see our dear Florence, the queen of Italy, after all. On the road I said to Penini, 'Make a poem about Florence.' Without a moment's hesitation he began, 'Florence is more pretty of all. Florence is a beauty. Florence was born first, and then Rome was born. And Paris was born after.' Penini is always *en verve.* He's always ready to make a poem on any subject, and doesn't ask you to wait while he clears his voice. The darling will soon get over the effect of that poisonous Roman air, I do trust, though it is humiliating to hear our Florentines wailing over the loss of bloom and dimples; it doesn't console me that his amount of growth is properly acknowledged. Well, good milk and good air will do their work in a little time with God's blessing, and a most voracious appetite is developed already, I am glad to say. Even in the journey he revived, the blue marks under the darling eyes fading gradually away, and now he looks decidedly better, though unlike himself of two months ago. You are to understand that the child is perfectly well, and that the delicate look is traceable distinctly and only to the attacks he had in Rome during the last few weeks. Throughout the winter he was radiant, as I used to tell you, and the confessed king of the whole host of his contemporaries and country-babies. . . .

The Kembles were our gain in Rome. I appreciate and admire both of them. They fail in nothing as you see them nearer. Noble and upright women, whose social brilliancy is their least distinction! Mrs. Sartoris is the more tender and tolerant, the more loveable and sympathetical, perhaps, to me. I should like you to know them both. Then there is that dear Mr. Page. Yes, and

Harriet Hosmer, the young American sculptress, who is an immense favorite with us both.

A comfort is that Robert is considered here to be looking better than he ever was known to look. And this notwithstanding the greyness of his beard, which indeed is, in my own mind, very becoming to him, the argentine touch giving a character of elevation and thought to the whole physiognomy. This greyness was suddenly developed; let me tell you how. He was in a state of bilious irritability on the morning of his arrival in Rome from exposure to the sun or some such cause, and in a fit of suicidal impatience shaved away his whole beard, whiskers and all! I *cried* when I saw him, I was so horror-struck. I might have gone into hysterics and still been reasonable; for no human being was ever so disfigured by so simple an act. Of course I said, when I recovered breath and voice, that everything was at an end between him and me if he didn't let it all grow again directly, and (upon the further advice of his looking-glass) he yielded the point, and the beard grew. But it grew *white*, which was the just punishment of the gods — our sins leave their traces.

Well, poor darling, Robert won't shock you after all, you can't choose but be satisfied with his looks. M. de Monclar swore to me that he was not changed for the intermediate years.

Robert talks of money, of waiting for *that*, among other hindrances to setting out directly. Not *my* fault, be certain, Sarianna! We seem to have a prospect of letting our house for a year, which, if the thing happens, will give us a lift.

We spent yesterday evening with Lytton at his villa, meeting there Mr. and Mrs. Walpole, Frederick Tennyson, and young Norton (Mrs. Norton's son), who married the Capri girl. She was not present, I am sorry to say. We walked home to the song of nightingales by starlight and firefly-light. Florence looks to us more beautiful than

ever after Rome. I love the very stones of it, to say nothing of the cypresses and river.

Robert says, 'Are you nearly done?' I am done. Give Penini's love and mine to the dear nonno, and tell him (and yourself, dear) how delighted we shall be [to] have you both. You are prepared to go to England, I hope. By the way, the weather there is said to be murderous through bitter winds, but it must soften as the season advances. May God bless you. I am yours in truest love.

Ba.

We had a very pleasant vettura journey, Robert will have told you.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: June 6, 1854.

Yes, dearest friend, I had your few lines which Arabel sent to me. I had them on the very day I had posted my letter to you, and I need not say how deeply it moved me that you should have thought of giving me that pleasure of Mr. Ruskin's kind word at the expense of what I knew to be so much pain to yourself. . . .

We mean to stay at Florence a week or two longer and then go northward. I love Florence, the place looks exquisitely beautiful in its garden-ground of vineyards and olive trees, sung round by the nightingales day and night, nay, sung *into* by the nightingales, for as you walk along the streets in the evening, the song trickles down into them till you stop to listen. Such nights we have between starlight and firefly-light, and the nightingales singing! I would willingly stay here, if it were not that we are constrained by duty and love to go, and at some day not distant, I daresay we shall come back 'for good and all' as people say, seeing that if you take one thing with another, there is no place in the world like Florence, I am

persuaded, for a place to live in. Cheap, tranquil, cheerful, beautiful, within the limit of civilisation yet out of the crush of it. I have not seen the Trollopes yet; but we have spent two delicious evenings at villas on the outside the gates, one with young Lytton, Sir Edward's son, of whom I have told you, I think. I like him, we both do, from the bottom of our hearts. Then our friend Frederick Tennyson, the new poet, we are delighted to see again. Have you caught sight of his poems? If you have tell me your thought. Mrs. Howe's I have read since I wrote last. Some of them are good — many of the thoughts striking, and all of a certain elevation. Of poetry, however, strictly speaking, there is not much; and there's a large proportion of conventional stuff in the volume. She must be a clever woman. Of the ordinary impotencies and prettinesses of female poets she does not partake, but she can't take rank with poets in the good meaning of the word, I think, so as to stand without leaning. Also there is some bad taste and affectation in the dressing of her personality. I daresay Mr. Fields will bring you her book. Talking of American literature, with the publishers on the back of it, we think of offering the proofs of our new works to any publisher over the water who will pay us properly for the advantage of bringing out a volume in America simultaneously with the publication in England. We have heard that such a proposal will be acceptable, and mean to try it. The words you sent to me from Mr. Ruskin gave me great pleasure indeed, as how should they not from such a man? I like him personally, too, besides my admiration for him as a writer, and I was deeply gratified in every way to have his approbation. His 'Seven Lamps' I have not read yet. Books come out slowly to Italy. It's our disadvantage, as you know. Ruskin and art go together. I must tell you how Rome made me some amends after all. Page, the American artist, painted a picture of Robert like an Italian, and then presented it to me like a prince. It is a wonderful

picture, the colouring so absolutely *Venetian* that artists can't (for the most part) keep their temper when they look at it, and the breath of the likeness is literal.[1] Mr. Page has *secrets* in the art — certainly nobody else paints like him — and his nature, I must say, is equal to his genius and worthy of it. Dearest Miss Mitford, the 'Athenæum' is always as frigid as Mont Blanc; it can't be expected to grow warmer for looking over your green valleys and still waters. It wouldn't be Alpine if it did. They think it a point of duty in that journal to shake hands with one finger. I daresay when Mr. Chorley sits down to write an article he puts his feet in cold water as a preliminary. Still, I oughtn't to be impertinent. He has been very good-natured to *me*, and it isn't his fault if I'm not Poet Laureate at this writing, and engaged in cursing the Czar in Pindarics very prettily. 'Atherton,' meanwhile, wants nobody to praise it, I am sure. How glad I shall be to seize and read it, and how I thank you for the gift. May God bless and keep you. I may hear again if you write soon to Florence, but don't pain yourself for the world, I entreat you. I shall see you before long, I think.

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

Robert's love.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: July 20, [1854].

My dearest Miss Mitford, — I this moment receive your little note. It makes me very sad and apprehensive about you, and I would give all this bright sunshine for weeks for one explanatory word which might make me more easy. Arabel speaks of receiving your books — I suppose 'Atherton' — and of having heard from yourself a very bad account of

[1] For the subsequent fate of this picture, see note on page 148, above.

your state of health. Are you worse, my beloved friend? I have been waiting to hear the solution of our own plans (dependent upon letters from England) in order to write to you; and when I found our journey to London was definitively rendered impossible till next spring, I deferred writing yet again, it was so painful to me to say to you that our meeting could not take place this year. Now, I receive your little note and write at once to say how sad *that* makes me. It is the first time that the expression of your love, my beloved friend, has made me sad, and I start as from an omen. On the other hand, the character you write in is so firm and like yourself, that I do hope and trust you are not sensibly worse. Let me hear by a word, if possible, that the change of weather has done you some little good. I understand there has scarcely been any summer in England, and this must necessarily have been adverse to you. A gleam of fine weather would revive you by God's help. Oh, that I could look in your face and say, 'God bless you!' as I feel it. May God bless you, my dear, dear friend.

Our reason for not going to England has not been from caprice, but a cross in money matters. A ship was to have brought us in something, and brought us in nothing instead, with a discount; the consequence of which is that we are transfixed at Florence, and unable even to 'fly to the mountains' as a refuge from the summer heat. It has been a great disappointment to us all, and to our respective families, my poor darling Arabel especially; but we can only be patient, and I take comfort in the obvious fact that my Penini is quite well and almost as rosy as ever in spite of the excessive Florence heat. One of the worst thoughts I have is about *you*. I had longed so to see you this summer, and had calculated with such certainty upon doing so. I would have gone to England for that single reason if I could, but I can't; we can't stir, really. That we should be able to sit quietly still at Florence and eat our bread and maccaroni is the utmost of our possibilities this summer.

Mrs. Trollope has gone to the Baths of Lucca, and thus I have not seen her. She will be very interested about you, of course. How many hang their hearts upon your sick-bed, dearest Miss Mitford! Yes, and their prayers too.

The other day, by an accident, an old number of the 'Athenæum' fell into my hands, and I read for the second time Mr. Chorley's criticism upon 'Atherton.' It is evidently written in a hurried manner, and is quite inadequate as a notice of the book; but, do you know, I am of opinion that if you considered it more closely you would lose your impression of its being depreciatory and cold. He says that the *only fault* of the work is its *shortness;* a rare piece of praise to be given to a work nowadays. You see, your reputation is at the height; neither he nor another could *help* you; such books as yours make their own way. The 'Athenæum' doesn't give full critiques of Dickens, for instance, and it is arctical in general temperature. I thought I would say this to you. Certainly I *do know* that Mr. Chorley highly regards you in every capacity — as writer and as woman — and in the manner in which he named you to me in his last letter there was no chill of sentiment nor recoil of opinion. So do not admit a doubt of *him;* he is a sure and affectionate friend, and absolutely high-minded and reliable; of an intact and even chivalrous delicacy. I say it, lest you might have need of him and be scrupulous (from your late feeling) about making him useful. It is horrible to doubt of one's friends; oh, I know *that,* and would save you from it.

We had a letter from Paris two days ago from one of the noblest and most intellectual men in the country, M. Milsand, a writer in the 'Deux Mondes.' He complains of a stagnation in the imaginative literature, but adds that he is consoled for everything by the 'state of politics.' Your Napoleon is doing you credit, his very enemies must confess.

As for me, I can't write to-day. Your little precious, melancholy note hangs round the neck of my heart like a

stone. Arabel simply says she is afraid from what you have written to her that you must be very ill; she does not tell me what you wrote to her — perhaps for fear of paining me — and now I am pained by the silence beyond measure.

Robert's love and warmest wishes for you. He appreciates your kind word to him. And I, what am I to say? I love you from a very sad and grateful heart, looking backwards and forwards — and *upwards* to pray God's love down on you!

Your ever affectionate

E. B. B., rather Ba.

Precious the books will be to me. I hope not to wait to read them till they reach me, as there is a bookseller here who will be sure to have them. Thank you, thank you.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: September 4, 1854.

Five minutes do not pass, my beloved friend, since reading this dear letter which has wrung from me tender and sorrowful tears, and answering it thus. Pray for you? I do not wait that you should bid me. May the divine love in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ shine upon you day and night, and make all our human loves strike you as cold and dull in comparison with that ineffable tenderness. As to wandering prayers, I cannot believe that it is of consequence whether this poor breath of ours wanders or does not wander. If we have strength to throw ourselves upon Him for everything, for prayer, as well as for the ends of prayer, it is enough, and He will prove it to be enough presently. I have been when I could not pray at all. And then God's face seemed so close upon me that there was no need of prayer, any more than if I were near *you*, as I yearn to be, as I ought to be, there would be need for this letter. Oh, be sure that He means well by us by what

we suffer, and it is when we suffer that He often makes the meaning clearer. You know how that brilliant, witty, true poet Heine, who was an atheist (as much as a man can pretend to be), has made a public profession of a change of opinion which was pathetic to my eyes and heart the other day as I read it. He has joined no church, but simply (to use his own words) has 'returned home to God like the prodigal son after a long tending of the swine.' It is delightful to go home to God, even after a tending of the sheep. Poor Heine has lived a sort of living death for years, quite deprived of his limbs, and suffering tortures to boot, I understand. It is not because we are brought low that we must die, my dearest friend. I hope — I do not say 'hope' for *you* so much as for *me* and for the many who hang their hearts on your life — I hope that you may survive all these terrible sufferings and weaknesses, and I take my comfort from your letter, from the firmness and beauty of the manuscript; I who know how weak hands will shudder and reel along the paper. Surely there is strength for more life in that hand. Now I stoop to kiss it in my thought. Feel my kiss on the dear hand, dear, dear friend.

A previous letter of yours pained me much because I seemed to have given you the painful trouble in it of describing your state, your weakness. Ah, I *knew* what that state was, and it was *therefore* that the slip of paper which came with 'Atherton' seemed to me so ominous! By the way, I shall see 'Atherton' before long, I dare say. The 'German Library' in our street is to have a 'box of new books' almost directly, and in it surely must be 'Atherton,' and you shall hear my thoughts of the book as soon as I catch sight of it. Then you have sent me the Dramas. Thank you, thank you; they will be precious. I saw the article in the 'Athenæum' with joy and triumph, and knew Mr. Chorley by the 'Roman hand.' In the 'Illustrated News' also, Robert (not I) read an enthusiastic notice. He fell upon it at the reading-room where I never

go on account of my *she*-dom, women in Florence being supposed not ——

[*Part of this letter is missing.*]

Think of me who am far, yet near in love and thought. Love me with that strong heart of yours. May God bless it, bless it.

I am ever your attached
E. B. B., rather BA.

I have had a sad letter from poor Haydon's daughter. She has fifty-six pounds a year, and can scarcely live on it in England, and inquires if she could live in any family in Florence. I fear to recommend her to come so far on such means. Robert's love. *May God bless you and keep you. Love me.*

To Miss Mitford

Florence: October 19, 1854.

I will try not to be overjoyed, my dear, dearest Miss Mitford, but, indeed, it is difficult to refrain from catching at hope with both hands. If the general health will but rally, there is nothing fatal about a spine disease. May God bless you, give you the best blessing in earth and heaven, as the God of the living in both places. We ought not to be selfish, nor stupid, so as to be afraid of leaving you in His hands. What is beautiful and joyful to observe is the patience and self-possession with which you endure even the most painful manifestation of His will; and that, while you lose none of that interest in the things of our mortal life which is characteristic of your sympathetic nature, you are content, just as if you felt none, to let the world go, according to the decision of God. May you be more and more confirmed and elevated and at rest — being the Lord's, whether absent from the body or present in it. For my own part, I have been long convinced that what we call death is a mere incident in life — perhaps scarcely a greater

one than the occurrence of puberty, or the revolution which comes with any new emotion or influx of new knowledge. I am heterodox about sepulchres, and believe that no *part of us* will ever lie in a grave. I don't think much of my nail-parings — do you? — not even of the nail of my thumb when I cut off what Penini calls the 'gift-mark' on it. I believe that the body of flesh is a mere husk which drops off at death, while the spiritual body (see St. Paul) emerges in glorious resurrection at once. Swedenborg says, some persons do not immediately realise that they have passed death, and this seems to me highly probable. It is curious that Maurice, Mr. Kingsley's friend, about whom so much lately has been written and quarrelled (and who *has* made certain great mistakes, I think), takes this precise view of the resurrection, with an apparent unconsciousness of what Swedenborg has stated upon the subject, and that, I, too, long before I knew Swedenborg, or heard the name of Maurice, came to the same conclusions. I wonder if Mr. Kingsley agrees with us. I dare say he does, upon the whole — for the ordinary doctrine seems to me as little taught by Scripture as it can be reconciled with philosophical probabilities. I believe in an active, *human* life, beyond death as before it, an uninterrupted human life. I believe in no waiting in the grave, and in no vague effluence of spirit in a formless vapour. But you'll be tired with 'what I believe.'

I have been to the other side of Florence to call on Mrs. Trollope, on purpose that I might talk to her of you, but she was not at home, though she has returned from the Baths of Lucca. From what I hear, she appears to be well, and has recommenced her 'public mornings,' which we shrink away from. She 'receives' every Saturday morning in the most heterogeneous way possible. It must be amusing to anybody not overwhelmed by it, and people say that she snatches up 'characters' for her 'so many volumes a year' out of the diversities of masks presented to

her on these occasions. Oh, our Florence! In vain do I cry out for 'Atherton.' The most active circulating library 'hasn't got it yet,' they say. I must still wait. Meanwhile, of course, I am delighted with all your successes, and your books won't spoil by keeping like certain other books. So I may wait.

How young children unfold like flowers, and how pleasant it is to watch them! I congratulate you upon yours — your baby-girl must be a dear forward little thing. But I wish I could show you my Penini, with his drooping golden ringlets and seraphic smile, and his talk about angels — you would like him, I know. Your girl-baby has avenged my name for me, and now, if you heard my Penini say in the midst of a coaxing fit — 'O, my sweetest little mama, my darling, *dearlest*, little Ba,' you would admit that 'Ba' must have a music in it, to my ears at least. The love of two generations is poured out to me in that name — and the stream seems to run (in one instance) when alas! the fountain is dry. I do not refer to the dead who live still.

Ah, dearest friend, you feel how I must have felt about the accident in Wimpole Street.[1] I can scarcely talk to you about it. There will be permanent lameness, Arabel says, according to the medical opinion, though the general health was not for a moment affected. But permanent lameness! That is sad, for a person of active habits. I ventured to write a little note — which was not returned, I thank God — or read, I dare say; but of course there was no result. I never even expected it, as matters have been. I must tell you that our pecuniary affairs are promising better results for next year, and that we shall not, in all probability, be tied up from going to England. For the rest — if I understand you — oh no! My husband has a family likeness to Lucifer in being proud. Besides, it's not necessary. When literary people are treated in England as

[1] To Mr. Barrett.

in some other countries, in that case and that time we may come in for our share in the pensions given by the people, without holding out our hands. Now think of Carlyle — unpensioned! Why, if we sate here in rags, we wouldn't press in for an obolus before Belisarius. Mrs. Sartoris has been here on her way to Rome, spending most of her time with us — singing passionately and talking eloquently. She is really charming. May God bless and keep you and love you, beloved friend. Love your own affectionate

Ba.

May it be Robert's love?

To Miss Browning

[Florence:] November 11, 1854 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — I shall be writing my good deeds in water to-day with this mere pretence at inks.[1] We are all well, though it is much too cold for me — a horrible tramontana which would create a cough under the ribs of death, and sets me coughing a little in the morning. I am afraid it's to be a hard winter again this year — or harder than last year's. We began fires on the last day of October, after the most splendid stretch of spring, summer, and autumn I ever remember. We have translated our room into winter — sent off the piano towards the windows, and packed tables, chairs, and sofas as near to the hearth as possible.

What a time of anxiety this war time is.[2] I do thank God that *we* have no reasons for its being a personal agony, through having anyone very precious at the post of danger. I have two first cousins there, a Hedley, and Paget Butler, Sir Thomas's son. I understand that the gloom in England from the actual bereavements is great; that the frequency of deep mourning strikes the eye; that even the

[1] This letter is written in very faint ink.

[2] The news of Inkerman had come only a few days before.

shops are filled chiefly with black; and that it has become a sort of *mode* to wear black or grey, without family losses, and from the mere force of sympathy.

My poor father is still unable to stir from the house, and he has been unwell through a bilious attack, the consequence of want of exercise. Nothing can induce him to go out in a carriage, because he 'never did in his life drive out for mere amusement,' he says. There's what Mr. Kenyon calls 'the Barrett obstinacy,' and it makes me uneasy as to the effect of it in this instance upon the general health of the patient. Poor darling Arabel seems to me much out of spirits — 'out of humour,' *she* calls it, dear thing — oppressed by the gloom of the house, and looking back yearningly to the time when she had sisters to talk to. Oh Sarianna, I wish we were all together to have a good gossip or groaning, with a laugh at the end! . . .

Your ever affectionate sister,

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: November 1854.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — you make me wait and I make you wait for letters. It is bad of us both — and remember, *worse of you*, seeing that you left two long letters of mine unanswered for months. I felt as if I had fallen down an *oubliette*, and I was about to utter the loud shrieks befitting the occasion, when you wrote at last. Don't treat me so another time; I want to know your plans for the winter, since the winter is upon us. Next summer, if it pleases God, we shall certainly meet somewhere — say Paris, say London. We shall have money for it, which we had not this year; and now the disappointment's over, I don't care. The heat at Florence was very bearable, and our child grew into his roses lost at Rome, and we have lived a very tranquil and happy six months on our own sofas and chairs, among our own nightingales and fireflies. There's

an inclination in me to turn round with my Penini and say, 'I'm an Italian.' Certainly both light and love seem stronger with me at Florence than elsewhere. . . .

The war! The alliance is the consolation; the necessity is the justification. For the rest, one shuts one's eyes and ears — the rest is too horrible. What do you mean by fearing that the war itself may not be all the evil of the war? I expect, on the contrary, a freer political atmosphere after this thunder. Louis Napoleon is behaving very tolerably well, won't you admit, after all? And I don't look to a treason at the end as certain of his enemies do, who are reduced to a 'wait, wait, and you'll see.' There's a friend of mine here, a traditional anti-Gallican, and very lively in his politics until the last few months. He can't speak now or lift up his eyelids, and I am too magnanimous in opposition to talk of anything else in his presence except Verdi's last opera, which magnanimity he appreciates, though he has no ear. About a month ago he came suddenly to life again. 'Have you heard the news? L. Napoleon is suspected of making a secret treaty with Russia.' The next morning he was as dead as ever — poor man! It's a desperate case for him.

Are you not happy — *you* — in this fast union between England and France? Some of our English friends, coming to Italy through France, say that the general feeling towards England, and the affectionate greetings and sympathies lavished upon them as Englishmen by the French everywhere, are quite strange and touching. 'In two or three years,' said a Frenchman on a railroad, 'French and English, we shall make only one nation. Are you very curious about the subject of gossip just now between Lord Palmerston and Louis Napoleon? We hear from somebody in Paris, whose *métier* it is to know everything, that it refers to the readjustment of affairs in Italy. May God grant it. The Italians have been hanging their whole hope's weight upon Louis Napoleon ever since he came to power, and if he

does now what he can for them I shall be proud of my *protégé* — oh, and so glad! Robert and I clapped our hands yesterday when we heard this; we couldn't refrain, though our informant was reactionary and in a deep state of conservative melancholy. 'Awful things were to be expected about Italy,' quotha!

Now do be good, and write and tell me what your plans are for the winter. We shall remain here till May, and then, if God pleases, go north — to Paris and London. Robert and I are at work on our books. I have taken to ass's milk to counteract the tramontana, and he is in the twenty-first and I in the twenty-second volume of Alexandre Dumas's 'Memoirs.' The book is *un peu hasardé* occasionally, as might be expected, but extremely interesting, and I really must recommend it to your attention for the winter if you don't know it already.

We have seen a good deal of Mrs. Sartoris lately on her way to Rome (Adelaide Kemble) — eloquent in talk and song, a most brilliant woman, and noble. She must be saddened since then, poor thing, by her father's death. Tell me if it is true that Harriet Martineau has seceded again from her atheism? We heard so the other day. Dearest Mrs. Martin, do write to me; and do, both of you, remember me, and think of both of us kindly. With Robert's true regards,

I am your as ever affectionate

BA.

Tell me dear Mr. Martin's mind upon politics — in the Austrian and Prussian question, for instance. We have no fears, in spite of Dr. Cumming and the prophets generally, of ultimate results.

To Miss Mitford

Florence: December 11, 1854.

I should have written long ago, my dearest Miss Mitford, to try to say half the pleasure and gratitude your letter made

for me, but I have been worried and anxious about the illnesses, not exactly in my family but nearly as touching to me, and hanging upon posts from England in a painful way inevitable to these great distances. . . .

I understand that literature is going on flaggingly in England just now, on account of nobody caring to read anything but telegraphic messages. So Thackeray told somebody, only he might refer chiefly to the fortunes of the 'Newcomes,' who are not strong enough to resist the Czar. The book is said to be defective in story. Certainly the subject of the war is very absorbing; we are all here in a state of tremblement about it. Dr. Harding has a son at Sebastopol, who has had already three horses killed under him. What hideous carnage! The allies are plainly numerically too weak, and the two governments are much blamed for not reinforcing long ago. I am discontented about Austria. I don't like handshaking with Austria; I would rather be picking her pocket of her Italian provinces; and, while upon such civil terms, how *can* we? Yet somebody, who professes to know everything, told somebody at Paris, who professes to tell everything, that Louis Napoleon and Lord Palmerston talked much the other day about what is to be done for Italy; and here in Italy we have long been all opening our mouths like so many young thrushes in a nest, expecting some 'worme small' from your Emperor. Now, if there's an Austrian alliance instead! . . .

Do you hear from Mr. Kingsley? and, if so, how is his wife? I am reading now Mrs. Stowe's 'Sunny Memories,' and like the naturalness and simplicity of the book much, in spite of the provincialism of the tone of mind and education, and the really wretched writing. It's quite wonderful that a woman who has written a book to make the world ring should write so abominably. . . .

Do you hear often from Mr. Chorley? Mr. Kenyon complains of never seeing him. He seems to have with-

drawn a good deal, perhaps into closer occupations, who knows? Aubrey de Vere told a friend of ours in Paris the other day that Mr. Patmore was engaged on a poem which 'was to be the love poem of the age,' parts of which he, Aubrey de Vere, had seen. Last week I was vexed by the sight of Mrs. Trollope's card, brought in because we were at dinner. I should have liked to have seen her for the sake of the opportunity of talking of *you*.

Do you know the engravings in the 'Story without an End'? The picture of the 'child' is just my Penini. Some one was observing it the other day, and I thought I would tell you, that you might image him to yourself. Think of his sobbing and screaming lately because of the Evangelist John being sent to Patmos. 'Just like poor Robinson Crusoe!' said he. I scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry, I was so astonished at this crisis of emotion.

Robert's love will be put in. May God bless you and keep you, and love you better than we all.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Casa Guidi: February 13, [1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — How am I to thank you for this most beautiful shawl, looking fresh from Galatea's flocks, and woven by something finer than her fingers? You are too good and kind, and I shall wrap myself in this piece of affectionateness on your part with very pleasant feelings. Thank you, thank you. I only wish I could have seen you (though more or less dimly, it would have been a satisfaction) in the face of your friend who was so kind as to bring the parcel to me. But I have been very unwell, and was actually in bed when he called; unwell with the worst attack on the chest I ever suffered from in Italy. Oh, I should have written to you long since if it had not been for

this. For a month past or more I have been ill. Now, indeed, I consider myself convalescent; the exhausting cough and night fever are gone, I may say, the pulse quiet, and, though considerably weakened and pulled down, that will be gradually remedied as long as this genial mildness of the weather lasts. You were quite right in supposing us struck here by the cold of which you complained even at Pau. Not only here but at Pisa there has been snow and frost, together with a bitter wind which my precaution of keeping steadily to two rooms opening one into another could not defend me from. My poor Robert has been horribly vexed about me, of course, and indeed suffered physically at one time through sleepless nights, diversified by such pastimes as keeping fires alight and warming coffee, &c., &c. Except for love's sake it wouldn't be worth while to live on at the expense of doing so much harm, but you needn't exhort — I don't give it up. I mean to live on and be well.

In the meantime, in generous exchange for your miraculous shawl, I send you back sixpence worth of rhymes. They were written for Arabel's Ragged School bazaar last spring (she wanted our names), and would not be worth your accepting but for the fact of their not being purchaseable anywhere.[1] A few copies were sent out to us lately. Half I draw back my hand as I give you this little pamphlet, because I seem to hear dear Mr. Martin's sardonic laughter at my phrase about the Czar. 'If she wink, &c.' Well, I don't generally sympathise with the boasting mania of my countrymen, but it's so much in the blood that, even with *me*, it exceeds now and then, you observe. Ask him to be as gentle with me as possible.

[1] Mrs. Browning's 'Song for the Ragged Schools of London' (*Poetical Works*, iv. 270) and her husband's 'The Twins' were printed together as a small pamphlet for sale at Miss Arabella Barrett's bazaar. Mrs. Browning's poem had been written before they left Rome.

Oh, the East, the East! My husband has been almost frantic on the subject. We may all cover our heads and be humble.[1] Verily we have sinned deeply. As to ministers, that there is blame I do not doubt. The Aberdeen element has done its worst, but our misfortune is that nobody is responsible; and that if you tear up Mr. So-and-so and Lord So-and-so limb from limb, as a mild politician recommended the other day, you probably would do a gross injustice against very well-meaning persons. It's the system, the system which is all one gangrene; the most corrupt system in Europe, is it not? Here is my comfort. Apart from the dreadful amount of individual suffering which cries out against us to heaven and earth, this adversity may teach us much, this shock which has struck to the heart of England may awaken us much, and this humiliation will altogether be good for us. We have stood too long on a pedestal talking of our moral superiority, our political superiority, and all our other superiorities, which I have long been sick of hearing recounted. Here's an inferiority proved. Let us understand it and remedy it, and not talk, talk, any more.

[*Part of this letter has been cut out.*]

We heard yesterday from the editor of the 'Examiner,' Mr. Forster, who expects some terrible consequence of present circumstances in England, as far as I can understand. The alliance with France is full of consolation. There seems to be a real heart-union between the peoples. What a grand thing the Napoleon loan is! It has struck the English with admiration.

I heard, too, among other English news, that Walter Savage Landor, who has just kept his eightieth birthday, and is as young and impetuous as ever, has caught the whooping cough by way of an illustrative accident. King-

[1] The horrors of the Crimean winter were now becoming known, which fully accounts for this outburst.

lake ('Eothen') came home from the Crimea (where he went out and fought as an amateur) with fever, which has left one lung diseased. He is better, however. . . .

Dearest Mrs. Martin, dearest friends, be both of you well and strong. Shall we not meet in Paris this early summer?

May God bless you! Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: February 24, 1855.

The devil (say charitable souls) is not as bad as he is painted, and even I, dearest Mona Nina, am better than I seem. In the first place, let me make haste to say that I *never received* the letter you sent me to Rome with the information of your family affliction, and that, if I had, it could never have remained an unnoticed letter. I am not so untender, so unsympathising, not so brutal — let us speak out. I lost several letters in Rome, besides a good deal of illusion. I did not like Rome, I think I confessed to you. In the second place, when your last letter reached me — I mean the letter in which you told me to write to you directly — I *would* have written directly, but was so very unwell that you would not have wished me even to try if, absent in the flesh, you had been present in spirit. I have had a severe attack on the chest — the worst I ever had in Italy — the consequence of exceptionally severe weather — a bitter wind and frost together — which quite broke me up with cough and fever at night. Now I am well again, only of course much weakened, and grown thin. I mean to get fat again upon cod's liver oil, in order to appear in England with some degree of decency. You know I'm a lineal descendant of the White Cat, and have seven lives accordingly. Also I have a trick of falling from six-storey windows upon my feet, in the manner of the traditions of my race. Not only I die hard, but I can hardly die.

'Half of it would kill *me*,' said an admiring friend the other day. 'What strength you must have.' A questionable advantage, except that I have also — a Robert, and a Penini!

Dearest friend, I don't know how to tell you of our fullness of sympathy in your late trials.[1] From a word which reached us from England the other day, there will be, I do trust, some effectual arrangement to relieve your friends from their anxieties about you. Then, there should be an increase of the Government pension by another hundred, that is certain; only the 'should be' lies so far out of sight in the ideal, that nobody in his senses should calculate on its occurrence. As to Law, it's different from Right — particularly in England perhaps — and appeals to Law are disastrous when they cannot be counted on as victorious, always and certainly. Therefore you may be wise in abstaining; you have considered sufficiently, of course. I only hope you are not trammelled in any degree by motives of delicacy which would be preposterous under the actual circumstances. You meantime are as nobly laborious as ever. We have caught hold of fragments in the newspapers from your 'Commonplace Book,' which made us wish for more; and Mr. Kenyon told me of a kind mention of Robert which was very pleasant to me.

How will it be? Shall you be likely to come to Italy before we set out to the north — that is, before the middle of May — or shall we cross on the road, like our letters, or shall we catch you in London, or in Paris at least? Oh, you won't miss the Exhibition in Paris. That seems certain.

I know Florence Nightingale slightly. She came to see me when we were in London last; and I remember her face and her graceful manner, and the flowers she sent me after-

[1] The death of Mrs. Jameson's husband in 1854 had left her in very straitened circumstances, which were ultimately relieved, in part, by a subscription among her friends and the admirers of her works.

wards. I honor her from my heart. She is an earnest, noble woman, and has fulfilled her woman's duty where many men have failed.

At the same time, I confess myself to be at a loss to see any new position for the sex, or the most imperfect solution of the 'woman's question,' in this step of hers. If a movement at all, it is retrograde, a revival of old virtues! Since the siege of Troy and earlier, we have had princesses binding wounds with their hands; it's strictly the woman's part, and men understand it so, as you will perceive by the general adhesion and approbation on this late occasion of the masculine dignities. Every man is on his knees before ladies carrying lint, calling them 'angelic she's,' whereas, if they stir an inch as thinkers or artists from the beaten line (involving more good to general humanity than is involved in lint), the very same men would curse the impudence of the very same women and stop there. I can't see on what ground you think you see here the least gain to the 'woman's question,' so called. It's rather *the contrary*, to my mind, and, any way, the women of England must give the precedence to the *sœurs de charité*, who have magnificently won it in all matters of this kind. For my own part (and apart from the exceptional miseries of the war), I acknowledge to you that I do not consider the best use to which we can put a gifted and accomplished woman is to *make her a hospital nurse*. If it is, why then woe to us all who are artists! The woman's question is at an end. The men's 'noes' carry it. For the future I hope you will know your place and keep clear of Raffaelle and criticism; and I shall expect to hear of you as an organiser of the gruel department in the hospital at Greenwich, that is, if you have the luck to *percer* and distinguish yourself.

Oh, the Crimea! How dismal, how full of despair and horror! The results will, however, be good if we are induced to come down from the English pedestal in Europe of incessant self-glorification, and learn that our close,

stifling, corrupt system gives no air nor scope for healthy and effective organisation anywhere. We are oligarchic in all things, from our parliament to our army. Individual interests are admitted as obstacles to the general prosperity. This plague runs through all things with us. It accounts for the fact that, according to the last marriage statistics, thirty per cent. of the male population signed with the *mark* only. It accounts for the fact that London is at once the largest and ugliest city in Europe. For the rest, if we cannot fight righteous and necessary battles, we must leave our place as a nation, and be satisfied with making pins. Write to me, but don't pay your letters, dear dear friend, and I will tell you why. Through some slip somewhere we have had to pay your two last letters just the same. So don't try it any more. Do you think we grudge postage from you? Tell me if it is true that Harriet Martineau is very ill. What do you hear of her?

May God bless you. With Robert's true love,

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

The following letter is the first of a few addressed to Mr. Ruskin, which have been made available through the kindness of Mrs. Arthur Severn. The acquaintanceship with Mr. Ruskin dated from the visit of the Brownings to England in 1852 (see vol. ii. p. 87, above); but the occasion of the present correspondence was the recent death of Miss Mitford, which took place on January 10, 1855. Mr. Ruskin had shown much kindness to her during her later years, and after her death had written to Mrs. Browning to tell her of the closing scenes of her friend's life.

To Mr. Ruskin

Florence: March 17, 1855.

I have your letter, dear Mr. Ruskin. The proof is the pleasure it has given me — yes, and given my husband,

which is better. 'When has a letter given me so much pleasure?' he exclaimed, after reading it; 'will you write?' I thank you much — much for thinking of it, and I shall be thankful of anything you can tell me of dearest Miss Mitford. I had a letter from her just before she went, written in so firm a hand, and so vital a spirit, that I could feel little apprehension of never seeing her in the body again. God's will be done. It is better so, I am sure. She seemed to me to see her way clearly, and to have as few troubling doubts in respect to the future life as she had to the imminent end of the present.

Often we have talked and thought of you since the last time we saw you, and, before your letter came, we had ventured to put on the list of expected pleasures connected with our visit to England, fixed for next summer, the pleasure of seeing more of Mr. Ruskin. For the rest, there will be some bitter things too. I do not miss them generally in England, and among them this time will be an empty place where I used always to find a tender and too indulgent friend.

You need not be afraid of my losing a letter of yours. The peril would be mine in that case. But among the advantages of our Florence — the art, the olives, the sunshine, the cypresses, and don't let me forget the Arno and mountains at sunset time — is that of an all but infallible post-office. One loses letters at Rome. Here, I think, we have lost *one* in the course of eight years, and for that loss I hold my correspondent to blame.

How good you are to me! How kind! The soul of a cynic, at its third stage of purification, might feel the value of 'Gold' laid on the binding of a book by the hand of John Ruskin. Much more I, who am apt to get too near that ugly 'sty of Epicurus' sometimes! Indeed you have gratified me deeply. There was 'once on a time,' as is said in the fairy tales, a word dropped by you in one of your books, which I picked up and wore for a crown.

Your words of goodwill are of great price to me always, and one of my dear friend Miss Mitford's latest kindnesses to me was copying out and sending to me a sentence from a letter of yours which expressed a favorable feeling towards my writings. She knew well — she who knew me — the value it would have for me, and the courage it would give me for any future work.

With my husband's cordial regards,

I remain most truly yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Our American friends, who sent to Dresden in vain for your letter, are here now, but will be in England soon on their way to America, with the hope of trying fate again in another visit to you. Thank you! Also thank you for your inquiry about my health. I have had a rather bad attack on my chest (never very strong) through the weather having been colder than usual here, but now I am very well again — for *me*.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: April 20, 1855.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Having nine lives, as I say, I am alive again, and prosperous — thanking you for wishing to know. People look at me and laugh, because it's a clear case of bulbous root with me — let me pass (being humble) for the onion. I was looking miserable in February, and really could scarcely tumble across the room, and now I am up on my perch again — nay, even out of my cage door. The weather is divine. One feels in one's self why the trees are green. I go out, walk out, have recovered flesh and fire — my very hair curls differently. '*Is I, I?*' I say with the metaphysicians. There's something vital about this Florence air, for, though much given to resurrection, I never made such a leap in my life before after illness. Robert and I need to run as well as leap. We have quantities of

work to do, and small time to do it in. He is four hours a day engaged in dictating to a friend of ours who transcribes for him, and I am not even ready for transcription — have not transcribed a line of my six or seven thousand. We go to England, or at least to Paris, next month, but it can't be early. Oh, may we meet you! Our little Penini is radiant, and altogether we are all in good spirits. Which is a shame, you will say, considering the state of affairs at Sebastopol. Forgive me. I never, at worst, thought that the great tragedy of the world was going on *there*. It was tragic, but there are more chronic cruelties and deeper despairs — ay, and more exasperating wrongs. For the rest, we have the most atrocious system in Europe, and we mean to work it out. Oh, you will see. Your committees nibble on, and this and that poisonous berry is pulled off leisurely, while the bush to the root of it remains, and the children eat on unhindered on the other side. I had hoped that there was real feeling among politicians. But no; we are put off with a fast day. There, an end! I begin to think that nothing will do for England but a good revolution, and a 'besom of destruction' used dauntlessly. We are getting up our vainglories again, smoothing our peacock's plumes. We shall be as exemplary as ever by next winter, you will see.

Meanwhile, dearest Mrs. Martin, that *you* should ask me about 'Armageddon' is most assuredly a sign of the times. You know I pass for being particularly mad myself, and everybody, almost universally, is rather mad, as may be testified by the various letters I have to read about 'visible spirit-hands,' pianos playing themselves, and flesh-and-blood human beings floating about rooms in company with tables and lamps. Dante has pulled down his own picture from the wall of a friend of ours in Florence five times, signifying his pleasure that it should be destroyed at once as unauthentic (our friend burnt it directly, which will encourage me to pull down mine by [*word lost*]). Savonarola also has said one or

two things, and there are gossiping guardian angels, of whom I need not speak. Let me say, though, that nothing has surprised me quite so much as *your* inquiring about Armageddon, because I am used to think of you as the least in the world of a theorist, and am half afraid of you sometimes, and range the chairs before my speculative dark corners, that you may not think or see 'how very wild that Ba is getting!' Well, now it shall be my turn to be sensible and unbelieving. There's a forced similitude certainly, in the etymology, between the two words; but if it were full and perfect I should be no nearer thinking that the battle of Armageddon could ever signify anything but a great spiritual strife. The terms, taken from a symbolical book, are plainly to my mind symbolical, and Dr. Cumming and a thousand mightier doctors could not talk it out of me, I think. I don't, for the rest, like Dr. Cumming; his books seem to me very narrow. Isn't the tendency with us all to magnify the great events of our own time, just as we diminish the small events? For me, I am heretical in certain things. I expect *no* renewal of the Jewish kingdom, for instance. And I doubt much whether Christ's 'second coming' will be personal. The end of the world is probably the end of a dispensation. What I expect is, a great development of Christianity in opposition to the churches, and of humanity generally in opposition to the nations, and I look out for this in much quiet hope. Also, and in the meanwhile, the war seems to be just and necessary. There is nothing in it to regret, except the way of conducting it. . . .

Write to me soon again, and tell me as much of both of you as you can put into a letter.

May God bless you always.

With Robert's warm regards, both of you think of me as

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Braun

Florence: May 13, [1855].

My dearest Madame Braun, — You have classed me and ticketed me before now, I think, as among the ungrateful of the world; yet I am grateful, grateful, grateful! When your book[1] came (how very kind you were to send it to me!) and when I had said so some five times running, in came somebody who was *fanatico per Roma*, and reverential in proportion for Dr. Braun, who with some sudden appeal to my sensibility — the softer just then that I was only just recovering strength after a sharp winter attack — swept the volume off the table and carried it off out of the house to study the contents at leisure. I expected it back the next week, but it lingered. And I really hadn't the audacity to write to you and say, 'Thank you, but I have looked as yet simply at the title-page.' Well, at last it comes home, and I turn the leaves, examine, read, approve, like Ludovisi and the Belvedere, with a double pleasure of association, and become *qualified* properly to thank you and Dr. Braun from Robert and myself for this gift to us and valuable contribution to archæological literature. I am only sorry I did not get to Rome after the book; it would have helped my pleasure so, holding up the lanthorn in dark places. So much suggestiveness in combination with so much specific information makes a book (or a man) worth knowing.

Of late, other hindrances have come to writing this, in the shape of various labours of Hercules, which fall sometimes to Omphale as well. We go to England in a week or two or three, and we take between us some sixteen thousand lines, eight on one side, eight on the other, which ought to be ready for publication. I have not finished my seventh thousand yet; Robert is at his mark. Then, I have to see that we have shoes and stockings to go in, and that Penini's little trousers are creditably frilled and tucked. Then,

[1] Dr. Braun's *Ruins and Museums of Rome* (1854).

about twenty letters lie by me waiting to be answered in time, so as to save me from a mobbing in England. Then there are visits to be paid all round in Florence, to make amends for the sins of the winter; visiting, like almsgiving, being put generally in the place of virtue, when the latter is found too inconvenient. Altogether, my head swims and my heart ticks before the day's done, with positive weariness. For there are Penini's lessons, you are to understand, besides the rest. And 'between the intersections,' cod liver oil to be taken judiciously, in order to appear before my English friends with due decency of corporeal coverture.

Well, now, do tell me, *shall* you go to England, *you?* You will see my reasons for being very interested. Oh, I hope you won't be snatched away to Naples, or nailed down at Rome. Railroads open from Marseilles; the exhibition open at Paris! Surely, surely Dr. Braun will go to Paris to see the exhibition. His conscience won't let him off. Tell him too, *from me*, that in London he may *see a spirit* if he will go for it. I have a letter from a friend who swears to me he has shaken hands with three or four — 'softer, more thrilling than any woman's hand' — 'tenderly touching' — think of that! The American 'medium' Hume is turning the world upside down in London with this spiritual influx.

Let me remember to tell you. Your paper *was in the 'Athenæum.'* Therefore, if you were not paid for it, it was the more abominable. Robert saw it with his own eyes, printed. When I heard from you that you had heard nothing, I mentioned the circumstance to Mrs. Jameson in a letter I was writing to her, and I do hope she has not neglected since to give you some information at least. You are aware probably of the excellent effect with which that kind Mrs. Procter has managed a private subscription in behalf of dear Mrs. Jameson, in consequence of which she will be placed in circumstances of ease for the rest of her life. Fanny Kemble nobly gave a hundred pounds towards this good purpose. Mrs. Jameson spoke in her last letter

of coming to Italy this summer, and I dare say we shall have the ill luck to lose her, miss her, cross her *en route*, perhaps.

We hear from dear Mr. Kenyon and from Miss Bayley; each very well and full of animation. If it were not for them, and my dear sisters, and one or two other hands I shall care to clasp (besides the spirits!) I would give much not to go north. Oh, we Italians grow out of the English bark; it won't hold us after a time. Such a happy year I have had this last! I do love Florence so! When Penini says, 'Sono Italiano, vogilo essere Italiano,' I agree with him perfectly.

So we shall come back of course, if we live; indeed, we leave this house ready to come back to, meaning, if we can, to let our rooms simply.

Little Penini looks like a rose, and has, besides, the understanding and sweetness of a creature 'a little lower than the angels.' I don't care any less for him than I did, upon the whole.

I hear the Sartoris's think of Paris for next winter, and mean to give up Rome. She has been a good deal secluded, until quite lately, they say, on account of her father's death, and brother's worse than death, which may account in part for any backwardness you may have observed. As to her 'not liking Dr. Braun,' do *you* believe in anybody's not liking Dr. Braun? *I* don't — quite. It's more difficult for me to 'receive' than the notion of the spiritual hand — 'tenderly touching.'

Do you know young Leighton[1] of Rome? If so, you will be glad of this wonderful success of his picture,[2] bought by the Queen, and applauded by the Academicians, and he not twenty-five.

[1] The late Lord Leighton, P.R.A.

[2] The picture of Cimabue's Madonna carried in procession through the streets of Florence. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1855, and was bought by the Queen.

The lady who brought your book did not leave her name here, so of course she did not *mean* to be called on.

Our kindest regards for dear Dr. Braun, and repeated truest thanks to both of you. Among his discoveries and inventions, he will invent some day an Aladdin's lamp, and then you will be suddenly potentates, and vanish in a clap of thunder.

Till then, think of me sometimes, dearest Madame Braun, as I do of *you*, and of all your great kindness to me at Rome.

Ever your affectionate

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Mr. Ruskin

Florence: June 2, 1855.

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I believe I shall rather prove in this letter how my head turns round when I write it, than explain why I didn't write it before — and so you will go on to think me the most unsusceptible and least grateful of human beings — no small distinction in our bad obtuse world. Yet the truth is — oh, the truth is, that I am deeply grateful to you and have felt to the quick of my heart the meaning and kindness of your words, the worth of your sympathy and praise. One thing especially which you said, made me thankful that I had been allowed to live to hear it — since even to fancy that anything I had written could be the means of the least good to *you*, is worth all the trumpet blowing of a vulgar fame. Oh, of course, I do not exaggerate, though your generosity does. I understand the case as it is. We burn straw and it warms us. My verses catch fire from you as you read them, and so you see them in that light of your own. But it is something to be used to such an end by such a man, and I thank you, thank you, and so does my

husband, for the deep pleasure you have given us in the words you have written.

And why not say so sooner? Just because I wanted to say so fully, and because I have been crushed into a corner past all elbow-room for doing anything largely and comfortably, by work and fuss and uncertainty of various kinds. Now it isn't any better scarcely, though it is quite fixed now that we are going from Florence to England — no more of the shadow dancing which is so pretty at the opera and so fatiguing in real life. We are coming, and have finished most of our preparations; conducted on a balance of — must we go? *may* we stay? which is so very inconvenient. If you knew what it is to give up this still dream-life of our Florence, where if one is over-busy ever, the old tapestries on the walls and the pre-Giotto pictures (picked up by my husband for so many pauls) surround us ready to quiet us again — if you knew what it is to give it all up and be put into the mill of a dingy London lodging and ground very small indeed, you wouldn't be angry with us for being sorry to go north — you wouldn't think it unnatural. As for me, I have all sorts of pain in England — everything is against me, except a few things; and yet, while my husband and I groan at one another, strophe and antistrophe (pardon that rag of Greek!) we admit our compensations — that it will be an excellent thing, for instance, to see Mr. Ruskin! Are we likely to undervalue that?

Let me consider how to answer your questions. My poetry — which you are so good to, and which you once thought 'sickly,' you say, and why not? (I have often written sickly poetry, I do not doubt — I have been sickly myself!) — has been called by much harder names, 'affected' for instance, a charge I have never deserved, for I do think, if I may say it of myself, that the desire of speaking or *spluttering* the real truth out broadly, may be a cause of a good deal of what is called in me careless and awkward expression. My friends took some trouble with me at one

time; but though I am not self-willed naturally, as you will find when you know me, I hope, I never could adopt the counsel urged upon me to keep in sight always the stupidest person of my acquaintance in order to clear and judicious forms of composition. Will you set me down as arrogant, if I say that the longer I live in this writing and reading world, the more convinced I am that the mass of readers *never* receive a poet (you, who are a poet yourself, must surely observe that) without intermediation? The few understand, appreciate, and distribute to the multitude below. Therefore to say a thing faintly, because saying it strongly sounds odd or obscure or unattractive for some reason, to 'careless readers,' does appear to me bad policy as well as bad art. Is not art, like virtue, to be practised for its own sake first? If we sacrifice our ideal to notions of immediate utility, would it not be better for us to write tracts at once.

Of course any remark of yours is to be received and considered with all reverence. Only, be sure you please to say, 'Do it differently to satisfy *me*, John Ruskin,' and not to satisfy Mr., Mrs. and the Miss and Master Smith of the great majority. The great majority is the majority of the little, you know, who will come over to you if you don't think of them — and if they don't, you will bear it.

Am I pert, do you think? No, *don't* think it. And the truth is, though you may not see that, that your praise made me feel very humble. Nay, I was quite *abashed* at the idea of the 'illumination' of my poem; and still I keep winking my eyes at the prospect of so much glory. If you were a woman, I might say, when one feels ugly one pulls down the blinds; but as a man you are superior to the understanding of such a figure, and so I must simply tell you that you honor me over much indeed. My husband is very much pleased, and particularly pleased that you selected 'Catarina,' which is his favourite among my poems for some personal fanciful reasons besides the rest.

But to go back. I said that any remark of yours was to be received by me in all reverence; and truth is a part of reverence, so I shall end by telling you the truth, that I think you quite wrong in your objection to 'nympholept.' Nympholepsy is no more a Greek word than epilepsy, and nobody would or could object to epilepsy or apoplexy as a Greek word. It's a word for a specific disease or mania among the ancients, that mystical passion for an invisible nymph common to a certain class of visionaries. Indeed, I am not the first in referring to it in English literature. De Quincey has done so in prose, for instance, and Lord Byron talks of 'The nympholepsy of a fond despair,' though *he* never was accused of being overridden by his Greek. Tell me now if I am not justified, I also? We are all nympholepts in running after our ideals — and none more than yourself, indeed!

Our American friend Mr. Jarves wrote to us full of gratitude and gratification on account of your kindness to him, for which we also should thank you. Whether he felt most overjoyed by the clasp of your hand or that of a disembodied spirit, which he swears was as real (under the mediumship of Hume, his compatriot), it was somewhat difficult to distinguish. But all else in England seemed dull and worthless in comparison with those two 'manifestations,' the spirits' and yours!

How very very kind of your mother to think of my child! and how happy I am near the end of my paper, not to be tempted on into 'descriptions' that 'hold the place of sense.' He is six years old, he reads English and Italian, and writes without lines, and shall I send you a poem of his for 'illumination'? His poems are far before mine, the very prattle of the angels, when they stammer at first and are not sure of the pronunciation of *es* and *is* in the spiritual heavens (see Swedenborg). Really he is a sweet good child, and I am not bearable in my conceit of him, as you see! My thankful regards to your mother, whom I shall hope to

meet with you, and do yourself accept as much from us both.

Most truly yours,
Elizabeth B. Browning.

We leave Florence next week, and spend at least a week in Paris, 138 Avenue des Champs-Elysées.

To Miss Browning

Florence: June 12, 1855 [postmark].

How kind and tender of you, my dearest Sarianna, to care so much to hear that I am better. I was afraid that Robert had written in the Crimean style about me, for he was depressed and uneasy, poor darling, and looked at things from the blackest point of view. Nevertheless, I have escaped some bad symptoms. No spitting of blood, for instance, no loss of voice, and scarcely a threatening of pain in the side. Also I have not grown thinner than is natural under the circumstances. At Genoa (after our cold journey[1]) I *wasted* in a few days, and thought much worse of myself than there was reason to do this time.

I can assure you I am now much restored. The cough is decidedly got under, and teases me, for the most part, only in the early morning; the fever is gone, and the nights are quiet. I am able to take animal food again, and shall soon recover my ordinary strength. Certainly it has been a bad attack, and I never suffered anything like it in Italy before. The illness at Genoa was the mere *tail* of what began in England, and was increased by the Alpine exposure. Our weather has been very severe — wind and frost together — something peculiarly irritating in the air. I am loth to blame my poor Florence, who never treated me so before (and how many winters we have spent here!) — and our friends write from Pisa that the weather was as trying

[1] In 1852.

there, while from Rome the account is simply 'detestable weather.' At Naples it is sometimes furiously cold; there's no perfect climate anywhere, that's certain. You have only to choose the least evil. Here for the last week it has been so mild that, if I had been in my usual state of health, I might have gone out, they say; and, of course, I have felt the influence beneficially. One encourages oneself in Italy when it is cold, with the assurance that it can't last. Our misfortune this time has been that it has lasted unusually long. How the Italians manage without fires I cannot make out. So chilly as they are, too, it's a riddle.

You would wonder almost how I could feel the cold in these two rooms opening into each other, and from which I have not stirred since the cold weather began. Robert has kept up the fire in our bedroom throughout the night. Oh, he has been spoiling me so. If it had not been that I feared much to hurt him in having him so disturbed and worried, it would have been a very subtle luxury to me, this being ill and feeling myself dear. Do not set me down as too selfish. May God bless him. . . .

Robert has been frantic about the Crimea, and 'being disgraced in the face of Europe,' &c. &c. When he is mild he wishes the ministry to be torn to pieces in the streets, limb from limb. I do not doubt that the Aberdeen side of the Cabinet has been greatly to blame, but the system is the root of the whole evil; if they don't tear up the system they may tear up the Aberdeens 'world without end,' and not better the matter; if they do tear up the system, then shall we all have reason to rejoice at these disasters, apart from our sympathy with individual sufferings. More good will have been done by this one great shock to the heart of England than by fifty years' more patching, and pottering, and knocking impotent heads together. What makes me most angry is the ministerial apology. 'It's always so with us for three campaigns,' ! ! ! 'it's our way,' 'it's want of experience,' &c. &c. That's precisely the

thing complained of. As to want of experience, if the French have had Algerine experiences, we have had our Indian wars, Chinese wars, Caffre wars, and military and naval expenses *exceeding* those of France from year to year. If our people had never had to pay for an army, they might sit down quietly under the taunt of wanting experience. But we have soldiers, and soldiers should have military education as well as red coats, and be led by properly qualified officers, instead of Lord Nincompoop's youngest sons. As it is in the army, so it is in the State. Places given away, here and there, to incompetent heads; nobody being responsible, no unity of idea and purpose anywhere — the individual interest always in the way of the general good. There is a noble heart in our people, strong enough if once roused, to work out into light and progression, and correct all these evils. Robert is a good deal struck by the generous tone of the observations of the French press, as contradistinguished from the insolences of the Americans, who really are past enduring just now. Certain of our English friends here in Florence have ceased to associate with them on that ground. I think there's a good deal of jealousy about the French alliance. That may account for something. . . .

Dearest, kindest Sarianna, remember not to think any more about me, except that I love you, that I am your attached

Ba.

CHAPTER IX

1855–1859

About a month after the date of the last letter, Mr. and Mrs. Browning left Italy for the second time. As on the previous occasion (1851–2), their absence extended over two summers and a winter, the latter being spent in Paris, while portions of each summer were given up to visits to England. Each of them was bringing home an important work for publication, Mr. Browning's 'Men and Women' containing much of his very greatest poetry, being passed through the press in 1855, while Mrs. Browning's 'Aurora Leigh,' although more than half of it had been written before she left Florence, was not ready for printing until the following year. They travelled direct from Florence to London, arriving there apparently in the course of July, and taking up their quarters at 13 Dorset Street. Their stay there was made memorable, as Mrs. Browning records below, by a visit from Tennyson, who read to them, on September 27, his new poem of 'Maud;' and it was while he was thus employed that Rossetti drew a well-known portrait of the Laureate in pen and ink. But in spite of glimpses of Tennyson, Ruskin, Carlyle, Kenyon, and other friends, the visit to England was, on the whole, a painful one to Mrs. Browning. Intercourse with her own family did not run smooth. One sister was living at too great a distance to see her; the other was kept out of her reach, for a considerable part of

the time, by her father. In addition, a third member of the Barrett family, her brother Alfred, earned excommunication from his father's house by the unforgivable offence of matrimony. Altogether it was not without a certain feeling of relief that, in the middle of October, Mrs. Browning, with her husband and child, left England for Paris. The whole visit had been so crowded with work and social engagements as to leave little time for correspondence; and the letters for the period are consequently few and short.

To Mrs. Martin

13 Dorset Street, Baker Street:
Tuesday, [July–August 1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I have waited days and days in the answering of your dear, kind, welcoming letter, and yet I have been very very grateful for it. Thank you. I need such things in England above other places.

For the rest, we could not go to Herefordshire, even if I were rational, which I am not; I could as soon open a coffin as do it: there's the truth. The place is nothing to me, of course, only the string round a faggot burnt or scattered. But if I went there, the thought of *one face* which never ceases to be present with me (and which I parted from for ever in my poor blind unconsciousness with a pettish word) would rise up, put down all the rest, and prevent my having one moment of ordinary calm intercourse with you, so don't ask me; set it down to mania or obstinacy, but I never *could* go into that neighbourhood, except to die, which I think sometimes I should like. So you may have me some day when the physicians give me up, but then, you won't, you know, and it wouldn't, any way, be merry visiting.

Foolish to write all this! As if any human being could

know thoroughly what *he* was to me. It must seem so extravagant, and perhaps affected, even to *you*, who are large-hearted and make allowances. After these years!

And, after all, I might have just said the other truth, that we are at the end of our purse, and can't travel any more, not even to Taunton, where poor Henrietta, who is hindered from coming to me by a like pecuniary straitness, begs so hard that we should go. Also, we are bound to London by business engagements; a book in the press (Robert's two volumes), and *proofs* coming in at all hours. We have been asked to two or three places at an hour's distance from London, and can't stir; to Knebworth, for instance, where Sir Edward Lytton wants us to go. It would be amusing in some ways; but we are tired. Also Robert's sister is staying with us.

Also, we shall see you in Paris on the way to Pau next November, shall we not? Write and tell me that we shall, and that you are not disgusted with me meanwhile.

Do you know our news? Alfred is just married at the Paris Embassy to Lizzie Barrett. . . . Of course, he makes the third exile from Wimpole Street, the course of true love running remarkably rough in our house. For the rest, there have been no *scenes*, I thank God, for dearest Arabel's sake. He had written to my father nine or ten days before the ceremony, received no answer, and followed up the silence rather briskly by another letter to announce his marriage. . . . I am going to write to him at Marseilles.

You cannot imagine to yourself the unsatisfactory and disheartening turmoil in which we are at present. It's the mad bull and the china shop, and, *nota bene*, we are the china shop. People want to see if Italy has cut off our noses, or what! A very kind anxiety certainly, but so horribly fatiguing that my heart sinks, and my brain goes round under the process. O my Florence! how much better you are!

Have you heard that Wilson is married to a Florentine

who lived once with the Peytons, and is here now with us, a good tender-hearted man?[1]

I am tolerably well, though to breathe this heavy air always strikes me as difficult; and my little Penini is very well, thank God. I want so much to show him to you. We shall be here till the end of September, if the weather admits of it, then go to Paris for the winter, then return to London, and then — why, *that* 'then' is too far off to see. Only we talk of Italy in the distance.

My book is not ready for the press yet; and as to writing here, who could produce an epic in the pauses of a summerset? Not that my poem is an epic, I hurry on to say in consideration for dear Mr. Martin's feelings. I flatter myself it's a *novel*, rather, a sort of novel in verse. Arabel looks well.

What pens! What ink! Do write, and tell me of *you both*. I love you cordially indeed.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

13 Dorset Street: Tuesday, [July–August 1855].

My dearest Mona Nina, — I write to you in the midst of so much fatigue and unsatisfactory turmoil, that I feel I shall scarcely be articulate in what I say. Still, it must be tried, for I can't have you think that I have come to London to forget you, much less to be callous to the influence of this dear affectionate letter of yours. May God bless you! How sorry I am that you should have vexation on the top of more serious hurts to depress you. Indeed, if it were not for the *other side of the tapestry*, it would seem not at all worth while for us to stand putting in

[1] Ferdinando Romagnoli. He died at Venice, in the Palazzo Rezzonico, January 1893. His widow (who, as the following letters show, continued to be called Wilson in the family) is still living with Mr. R. B. Browning.

more weary Gobelin stitches (till we turn into goblins) day after day, year after year, in this sad world. For my part, I am ready at melancholy with anybody. The air, mentally or physically considered, is very heavy for me here, and I long for the quiet of my Florence, where somehow it always has gone best with my life. As to England, it affects me so, in body, soul, and circumstances, that if I could not get away soon, I should be provoked, I think, into turning monster and *hating* the whole island, which shocks you so to hear, that you will be provoked into not loving me, perhaps, and *that* would really be too hard, after all.

The best news I can give you is that Robert has printed the first half volume of his poems, and that the work looks better than ever in print, as all true work does brought into the light. He has read these proofs to Mr. Fox (of Oldham), who gives an opinion that the poems are at the top of art in their kind. I don't know whether you care for Mr. Fox's opinion, but it's worth more than mine, of course, on the ground of *impartiality*, to say no otherwise, and it will disappoint me much if you don't confirm both of us presently. The poems, for variety, vitality, and intensity, are quite worthy of the writer, it seems to me, and a clear advance in certain respects on his previous productions.

Has 'Maud' penetrated to you? The winding up is magnificent, full of power, and there are beautiful thrilling bits before you get so far. Still, there is an appearance of labour in the early part; the language is rather encrusted by skill than spontaneously blossoming, and the rhythm is not always happy. The poet seems to aim at more breadth and freedom, which he attains, but at the expense of his characteristic delicious music. People in general appear very unfavourably impressed by this poem, *very unjustly*, Robert and I think. On some points it is even an advance. The sale is great, *nearly five thousand copies already*.

Let me see what London news I have to tell you. We spent an evening with Mr. Ruskin, who was gracious and generous, and strengthened all my good impressions. Robert took our friend young Leighton to see him afterwards, and was as kindly received. We met Carlyle at Mr. Forster's, and found him in great force, particularly in the damnatory clauses. Mr. Kinglake we saw twice at the Procters', and once here. . . . The Procters are very well. How I like Adelaide's face! that's a face worth a drove of beauties! Dear Mrs. Sartoris has just left London, I grieve to say; and so has Mrs. Kemble, who (let me say it quick in a parenthesis) is looking quite magnificent just now, with those gorgeous eyes of hers. Mr. Kenyon, too, has vanished — gone with his brother to the Isle of Wight. The weather has been very uncertain, cloudy, misty, and rainy, with heavy air, ever since we came. Ferdinando keeps saying, 'Povera gente, che deve vivere in questo posto,' and Penini catches it up, and gives himself immense airs, discoursing about Florentine skies and the glories of the Cascine to anyone who will listen. The child is well, thank God, and in great spirits, which is my comfort. I found my dear sister Arabel, too, well, and it is deep yet sad joy to me to look in her precious loving eyes, which never failed me, nor could. Henrietta will be hindered, perhaps, from coming to see me by want of means, poor darling; and the same cause will keep me from going to Taunton. We have a quantity of invitations to go into the country, to the Custs, to the Martins, &c. &c., and (one which rather tempts *me*) to Knebworth, Sir Edward Lytton having written us the kindest of possible invitations; but none of these things are for us, I see.

Dearest friend, I do hope you won't go to Rome this winter. When you have been to Vienna, come back, and let us have you in Paris. I am glad Lady Elgin liked the book. The history of it was that she asked Robert to get it for her, and he *presented* it instead.

Our M. Milsand likes you much, he says, and I like you to hear it. . . .

Oh, we read your graceful, spirited letter in the 'Athenæum.' By the way, did you see the absurd exposition of 'Maud' as an allegory? What pure madness, instead of Maudness!

To Mrs Martin

13 Dorset Street: Monday, [August–September 1855].

Day after day, my dearest Mrs. Martin, I have been meaning to write to you, always in vain, and now I hear from Mrs. Ormus Biddulph that you are not quite well. How is this? Shall I hear soon that you are better? I want something to cheer me up a little. The bull is out of the china shop, certainly, but the broken pottery doesn't enjoy itself much the more for that. I have lost my Arabel (my one light in London), who has had to go away to Eastbourne; very vexed at it, dear darling, though she really required change of air. We, for our parts, are under promise to follow her in a week, as it will be on our way to Paris, and not cost us many shillings over the expenses of the direct route. But the days drag themselves out, and there remains so much work (on proof sheets, &c.) to be done here, that I despond of our being able to move as soon as I fain would. I assure you I am stuffed as hard as a cricket ball with the work of every day, and I have waited in vain for a clear hour to write quietly and comfortably to you, in order to say how your letter touched me, dear dear friend. You always understand. Your sympathy stretches *beyond* points of agreement, which is so rare and so precious, and makes one feel so unspeakably grateful. . . .

London has emptied itself, as you may suppose, by this time. Mrs. Ormus Biddulph was so kind as to wish us to dine with them on Monday (to-day), but we found it abso-

lutely impossible. The few engagements we make we don't keep, and I shall try for the future to avoid perjury. As it is, I have no doubt that various people have set me down as 'full of arrogance and assumption,' at which the gods must laugh, for really, if truths could be known, I feel even morbidly humble just now, and could show my sackcloth with anybody's sackcloth. But it is difficult to keep to the conventions rigidly, and return visits to the hour, and hold engagements to the minute, when one has neither carriage, nor legs, nor time at one's disposal, which is my case. If I don't at once answer (for instance) such a letter as you sent me, I must be a beggar. . . .

May God bless you both, my very dear friends. My husband bids me remember him to you in cordial regard. I long to see you, and to hear (first) that you are well.

Dearest Mrs. Martin's ever attached

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

13 Dorset Street: Tuesday, [October 1855].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I can't go without writing to you, but I am ground down with last things to do on last days, and it must be a word only. Dearest friend, I have waited morning after morning for a clear half-hour, because I didn't like to do your bidding and write briefly, though now, after all, I am reduced to it. We leave England to-morrow, and shall sleep (D.V.) at 102 *Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain, Paris*, — I am afraid in a scarcely convenient apartment, which a zealous friend, in spite of our own expressed opinion, secured for us for the term of six months, because of certain yellow satin furniture which only she could consider 'worthy of us.' We shall probably have to dress on the staircase, but what matter? There's the yellow satin to fall back upon.

If the rooms are not tenable, we must underlet them, or try. . . .

One of the pleasantest things which has happened to us here is the coming down on us of the Laureate, who, being in London for three or four days from the Isle of Wight, spent two of them with us, dined with us, smoked with us, opened his heart to us (and the second bottle of port), and ended by reading 'Maud' through from end to end, and going away at half-past two in the morning. If I had had a heart to spare, certainly he would have won mine. He is captivating with his frankness, confidingness and unexampled *naïveté!* Think of his stopping in 'Maud' every now and then — 'There's a wonderful touch! That's very tender. How beautiful that is!' Yes, and it *was* wonderful, tender, beautiful, and he read exquisitely in a voice like an organ, rather music than speech.

War, war! It is terrible certainly. But there are worse plagues, deeper griefs, dreader wounds than the physical. What of the forty thousand wretched women in this city? The silent writhing of them is to me more appalling than the roar of the cannons. Then this war is *necessary* on our sides. Is *that* wrong necessary? It is not so clear to me.

Can I write of such questions in the midst of packing?

May God bless you both. Write to me in Paris, and do come soon and find us out.

Robert's love. My love to you both, dearest friends. May God bless you. Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mr. Ruskin

13 Dorset Street:
Tuesday morning, October 17, 1855 [postmark].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I can't express our amount of mortification in being thwarted in the fulfilment of the

promise you allowed us to make to ourselves, that we would go down to you once more before leaving England. What with the crush rather than press of circumstances, I have scarcely needed the weather to pin me to the wall. Sometimes my husband could not go with me, sometimes I couldn't go with him, and always we waited for one another in hope, till this last day overtook us. To-morrow (D.V.) we shall be in Paris. Now, will you believe how we have wished and longed to see you beyond these strait tantalising limits? — how you look to us at this moment like the phantasm of a thing dear and desired, just seen and vanishing? What! are you to be ranked among my spiritualities after all? Forgive me that wrong.

Then you had things to say to me, I know, which in your consideration, and through my cowardice, you did not say, but yet will!

Will you write to me, dear Mr. Ruskin, sometimes, or have I disgusted you so wholly that you won't or can't?

Once, I know, somewhat because of shyness and somewhat because of intense apprehension — somewhat, too, through characteristic stupidity (no contradiction this!) — I said I was grateful to you when you had just bade me not. Well, I really couldn't help it. That's all I can say now. Even if your appreciation were perfectly deserved at all points, why, appreciation means sympathy, and sympathy being the best gift nearly which one human creature can give another, I don't understand (I never could) why it does not deserve thanks. I am stupid perhaps, but for my life I never could help being grateful to the people who loved me, even if they happened to say, 'I can't help it! not I!'

As for Mr. Ruskin, he sees often in his own light. That's what I see and feel.

Will you write to me sometimes? I come back to it. Will you, though I am awkward and shy and obstinate now and then, and a wicked spiritualist to wit — a *realist* in an

out-of-the-world sense — accepting matter as a means (no matter for it otherwise !) ?

Don't give me up, dear Mr. Ruskin ! My husband's truest regards, and farewell from both of us ! I would fain be

Your affectionate friend,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Our address in Paris will be, 102 *Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain.*

The house in the Rue de Grenelle, however, did not prove a success, in spite of the consolations of the yellow satin, and after six weeks of discomfort and house hunting the Brownings moved to 3 Rue de Colisée, which became their home for the next eight months. It was a period, first of illness caused by the unsuitable rooms, and then of hard work for Mrs. Browning, who was engaged in completing 'Aurora Leigh,' while her husband was less profitably employed in the attempt to recast 'Sordello' into a more intelligible form. No such incident as the visits to George Sand marked this stay in Paris, and politics were in a very much less exciting state. The Crimean war was just coming to a close, and public opinion in England was far from satisfied with the conduct of its ally ; but on the whole the times were uneventful.

The first letter from Paris has, however, a special interest as containing a very full estimate of the character and genius of Mrs. Browning's dear friend, Miss Mitford. It is addressed to Mr. Ruskin, who had been unceasingly attentive and helpful to Miss Mitford during her declining days.

To Mr. Ruskin

Paris, 102 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg St. Germain:
November 5, [1855].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — I thank you from my heart for your more than interesting letter. You have helped me to see that dear friend of ours, as without you I could not have seen her, in those last affecting days of illness, by the window not only of the house in Berkshire, but of the house of the body and of the material world — an open window through which the light shone, thank God. It would be a comfort to me now if I had had the privilege of giving her a very very little of the great pleasure you certainly gave her (for I know how she enjoyed your visit — she wrote and told me), but I must be satisfied with the thought left to me, that now *she* regrets nothing, not even great pleasures.

I agree with you in much if not in everything you have written of her. It was a great, warm, outflowing heart, and the head was worthy of the heart. People have observed that she resembled Coleridge in her granite forehead — something, too, in the lower part of the face — however unlike Coleridge in mental characteristics, in his tendency to abstract speculation, or indeed his ideality. There might have been, as you suggest, a somewhat different development elsewhere than in Berkshire — not very different, though — souls don't grow out of the ground.

I agree quite with you that she was stronger and wider in her conversation and letters than in her books. Oh, I have said so a hundred times. The heat of human sympathy seemed to bring out her powerful vitality, rustling all over with laces and flowers. She seemed to think and speak stronger holding a hand — not that she required help or borrowed a word, but that the human magnetism acted on her nature, as it does upon men born to speak. Perhaps if she had been a man with a man's opportunities, she

would have spoken rather than written a reputation. Who can say? She hated the act of composition. Did you hear that from her ever?

Her letters were always admirable, but I do most deeply regret that what made one of their greatest charms unfits them for the public — I mean their personal details. Mr. Harness sends to me for letters, and when I bring them up, and with the greatest pain force myself to examine them (all those letters she wrote to me in her warm goodness and affectionateness), I find with wonder and sorrow how only a half-page here and there *could* be submitted to general readers — *could*, with any decency, much less delicacy.

But no, her 'judgment' was not 'unerring.' She was too intensely sympathetical not to err often, and in fact it was singular (or seemed so) what faces struck her as most beautiful, and what books as most excellent. If she loved a person, it was enough. She made mistakes one couldn't help smiling at, till one grew serious to adore her for it. And yet when she read a book, provided it wasn't written by a friend, edited by a friend, lent by a friend, or associated with a friend, her judgment could be fine and discriminating on most subjects, especially upon subjects connected with life and society and manners. Shall I confess? She never taught *me* anything but a very limited admiration of Miss Austen, whose people struck me as wanting souls, even more than is necessary for men and women of the world. The novels are perfect as far as they go — that's certain. Only they don't go far, I think. It may be my fault.

You lay down your finger and stop me, and exclaim that it's my way perhaps to attribute a leaning of the judgment through personal sympathy to people in general — that I do it perhaps to *you*. No, indeed. I can quite easily believe that you don't either think or say 'the pleasantest things to your friends;' in fact, I am sure you don't. You would say them as soon to your enemies — perhaps sooner. Also, when you began to say pleasant things to me, you hadn't a

bit of personal feeling to make a happy prejudice of, and really I can't flatter myself that you have now. What I meant was that you, John Ruskin, not being a critic *sal merum* as the ancients had it, but half critic, and half poet, may be rather encumbered sometimes by the burning imagination in you, may be apt sometimes, when you turn the light of your countenance on a thing, to see the thing lighted up as a matter of course, just as we, when we carried torches into the Vatican, were not perfectly clear how much we brought to that wonderful Demosthenes, folding the marble round him in its thousand folds — how much we brought, and how much we received. Was it the sculptor or was it the torch bearer who produced that effect? And like doubts I have had of you, I confess, and not only when you have spoken kindly of *me*. You don't mistake by your heart, through loving, but you exaggerate by your imagination, through glorifying. There's my thought at least.

But what I meant by 'apprehending too intensely,' dear Mr. Ruskin, don't ask me. Really I have forgotten. I suppose I did mean something, though it was a day of chaos and packing boxes — try to think I did therefore, and let it pass.

You please me — oh, so much — by the words about my husband. When you wrote to praise my poems, of course I had to bear it — I couldn't turn round and say, 'Well, and why don't you praise him, who is worth twenty of me? Praise my second Me, as well as my Me proper, if you please.' One's forced to be rather decent and modest for one's husband as well as for one's self, even if it's harder. I couldn't pull at your coat to read 'Pippa Passes,' for instance. I can't now.

But you have put him on the shelf, so we have both taken courage to send you his new volumes, 'Men and Women,' not that you may say 'pleasant things' of them or think yourself bound to say anything indeed, but that

you may accept them as a sign of the esteem and admiration of both of us. I consider them on the whole an advance upon his former poems, and am ready to die at the stake for my faith in these last, even though the discerning public should set it down afterwards as only a 'Heretic's Tragedy.'

Our friend Mr. Jarves came to read a part of your letter to us, confirmatory of doctrines he had heard from us on an earlier day. The idea of your writing the art criticisms of the 'Leader' (!) was so stupendously ludicrous, there was no need of faith in your loyalty to laugh the whole imputation, at first hearing, to uttermost scorn. I must say, in justice to Mr. Jarves, that he never did really believe one word of it, though a good deal ruffled and pained that it should have been believed by anybody. He is full of admiring and grateful feeling for you, and has gone on to Italy in that mind.

As for me, I almost yearn to go too. We have fallen into a pit here in Paris, upon evil days and rooms, an impulsive friend having taken an apartment for us facing the east, insufficiently protected, and with a bedroom wanting, so that we are still waiting, with trunks unpacked, and our child sleeping on the floor, till we can get emancipated anyhow. Then, through the last week's cold, I have not been well — only it will not, I think, be much, as I am better already, and there will be no practical end to the talk of Nice and Pau, which my husband had begun a little. All this has hindered me from following my first impulse of thanking you for your letter immediately.

How beautiful Paris is, and how I agree with you, as we both did with dear Miss Mitford, on the subject of Louis Napoleon. I approve of him *exactly because* I am a democrat, and not at all for an exceptional reason. I hold that the most democratical government in Europe is out and out the French Government (which doesn't exclude the absolutist element, far from it); but who in England understands this? and that the representative man of France, the

incarnate republic, is the man Louis Napoleon? An extraordinary man he is. I never was a Buonapartist, though the legend of the first Napoleon has wrung tears from me before now, and I was very sorry when Louis Napoleon was elected instead of Cavaignac. At the *coup d'état* I was not sorry. And since then I have believed in him more and more.

So far in sympathy. In regard to the slaves, no, no, no; I belong to a family of West Indian slaveholders, and if I believed in curses, I should be afraid. I can at least thank God that I am not an American. How you look serenely at slavery, I cannot understand, and I distrust your power to explain. Do you indeed?

Dear Mr. Ruskin, do let us hear from you sometimes. It is such a great gift, a letter of yours. Then remember that I am a spirit in prison all the winter, not able to stir out. Up to this time we have lived *perdus* from all our acquaintances because of our misfortunes. With my husband's cordial regards, I remain most truly yours always,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

The publishers are directed to send you the volumes on their publication.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris,] 3 Rue du Colisée, Avenue des Champs-Elysées:
Saturday, December 17, 1855 [postmark].

How pleasant, dearest Mona Nina, to hear you, though the voice sounds far! Try and come back to us soon, and let us talk, or listen, rather, to your talking. Why shouldn't *I*, too, have a sister of charity, like others? I appeal to you.

Still, I have only good to tell you of myself. I am better through the better weather and through our arrival in this apartment, where, as Robert says, we are as pleased as if we had never lived in a house before. Well, I assure you

the rooms are perfect in comfort and convenience; not large, but *warm*, and of a number and arrangement which exclude all fault-finding. Clean, carpeted; no glitter, nothing very pretty — not even the clocks — but with sofas and chairs suited to lollers such as one of us, and altogether what I mean whenever I say that an 'apartment' on the Continent is twenty times more really 'comfortable' than any of your small houses in England. Robert has a room to himself too. It's perfect. I hop about from one side to the other, like a bird in a new cage. The feathers are draggled and rough, though. I am not strong, though the cough is quieter without the least doubt.

And this time also I shall not die, perhaps. Indeed, I do think not.

That darling Robert carried me into the carriage, swathed past possible breathing, over face and respirator in woollen shawls. No, he wouldn't set me down even to walk up the fiacre steps, but shoved me in upside down, in a struggling bundle — I struggling for breath — he accounting to the concierge for 'his murdered man' (rather woman) in a way which threw me into fits of laughter afterwards to remember! 'Elle se porte très bien! elle se porte extrêmement bien. Ce n'est rien que les poumons.' Nothing but lungs. No air in them, which was the worst! Think how the concierge must have wondered ever since about 'cet original d'Anglais,' and the peculiar way of treating wives when they are in excellent health. 'Sacre.'

Kind Madame Mohl was here to-day, asking about you; and the Aïdés, male and female, whom we did not see, being at dinner; and dear Lady Elgin came to the door in her wheel-chair.

We keep Penini (in a bed this time) in our bedroom. He was so pathetic about it, we would not lose him.

Write to us, keep writing to us, till you come. I think much of you, wish much for you, and feel much *with* you. May God bless you, my dear dear friend. The

frost broke up on Thursday, and it is raining warmly to-day; but I can't believe in the possibility of the cold penetrating much into this house under worse circumstances; and I shall be bold, and try hard to begin writing next week.

Oh! George Sand. How magnificent that eighteenth volume is; I mean the volume which concludes with the views upon the *sexes!* After all, and through all, if her hands are ever so defiled, that woman has a clean soul.

On the magnetic subjects, too, her 'je ne sais' is worthy of her. And yet, more is to be known, I am sure, than she knows.

I read this book so eagerly and earnestly that I seem to burn it up before me. Really there are great things in it.

And to hear people talking it over coldly, pulling it leaf from leaf!

Robert quite joins with me at last. He is intensely interested, and full of admiration.

Now do write. With our united love, we are ever yours, be certain!

R. B. and E. B. B.

Remember not to agree to do the etching. Pray be careful not to involve the precious eyes too much. How easy it would be to etch them out! Frightfully easy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Paris,] 3 Rue du Colisée:
Monday, January 29, 1856 [postmark].

Dearest Fanny, — I can't get over it that you should fancy I meant to 'banter' you.[1] If I wrote lightly, it was partly that *you* wrote lightly, and partly perhaps because at bottom I wasn't light at all. When one feels out of spirits, it's the most natural thing possible to be extravagantly gay; now, isn't it?

[1] This refers to a note from Mrs. Browning to Miss Haworth, inquiring whether it was true that she was engaged to be married.

And now believe me with what truth and earnestness of heart I am interested in all that concerns you; and this is every woman's chief concern, of course, this great fact of love and marriage. My advice is, be sure of him *first*, and of yourself *chiefly*. For the rest I would marry ('if I were a woman,' I was going to say), though the whole world spouted fire in my face. Marriage is a personal matter, be sure, and the nearest and wisest can't judge for you. If you can make up two hundred a year between you, or less even, there is no pecuniary obstacle in my eyes. People may live very cheaply and very happily if they are happy otherwise.

As for me, my only way was to cut the knot — because it was an untieable knot — and because my fingers generally are not strong at untying. What do you mean by Mr. Kenyon's backing me? Nobody backed me except the north wind which blew us vehemently out of England. Mr. Kenyon knew no more of the affair than you did, though he was very kind afterwards and took my part. And as to money, there was (and is) little enough. It was a case of pure madness (for people of the world), just like table-moving and spirit-rapping and the 'hands'!

But you, my dear friend, I do earnestly entreat you to consider if you are sure of principles, sentiment — and *of yourself*. Because, whether you know it or not, you are happily situated *now* as far as exterior circumstances are concerned. They are not worth much, but they have their worth. They give you liberty to follow your own devices, to think the beautiful and feel the noble; to live out, in short, your individual life, which it is so hard to do in marriage, even where you marry worthily.

I say this probably 'as one who beateth the air;' yet you *must* consider that I who say it, and who say it *emphatically*, consider a happy marriage as the happiest state, and that all pecuniary reasons against love are both ineffectual and *stupid*.

Flippancy, flippancy, of course. London would be better (for your friends) as a residence for you, than Wittemberg can be; and for that, and no other account, I could be sorry that you did not settle *so*.

Well, never mind! The description sounds excellently; almost over romantic, though. Is there steadiness, do you think, and depth, and reliableness altogether? What impression does he make among those who have known him longest? Dearest Fanny, do nothing in haste.

Now I am going to tell you something which has vexed me, and continues to vex me. The clock. If you knew Robert, you never would have asked him. He has a sort of mania about shops, and won't buy his own gloves. He bought a pair of boots the other day (because I went down on my knees to ask him, and the water was running in through his soles), and he will not soon get over it. Without exaggeration, he would rather leap down among the lions after your glove, as the knight of old, than walk into a shop for you. If I could but go out, there would be no difficulties; but I am shut up in my winter prison, in spite of the extraordinarily mild weather, through having suffered so much in the beginning of the winter. I asked Sarianna; she also shrinks from the responsibility; is afraid of not pleasing you, &c. The end of it all is that Mrs. Haworth will think us all very disobliging barbarians, and that really I am vexed. Why not ask Mrs. Cochrane to get the thing for you? You can but ask, at any rate.

I am very anxious just now about dear Mr. Kenyon, who has been alarmingly ill, and is only better, I fear. Miss Bayley wrote to tell me, and added that he was going to Cowes when he could move, which pleases me; for only change of air and liberation from London air can complete his convalescence.

For the rest, I am busy beyond description; but never too much so, mind, dear Fanny, to be glad to get your letters. Write soon. Your ever affectionate

E. B. B.

To Mrs. Martin

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée: February 21, [1856].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I should have answered your note days ago! If you saw how I am in a plague of industry just now, and not a moment unspotted! — how, for instance, I kept an 'Examiner' newspaper (sent to us from London) three days on the table before I could read it, — you would make an allowance for me. It's a sort of *furia!* I must get over so much writing, or I shall be too late for the summer's printing. If it isn't done by June, what will become of me? I shall go back to Italy in disgrace, and considerably poorer than I need be, which is of more practical consequence. So I fag. Then there's an hour and a half in the morning for Penini's lessons. We breakfast at nine, and receive nobody till past four. This will all prove to you two things, dearest friend — first (I hope) that I'm pardonable for making you wait a few days longer than should have been, and secondly that I'm tolerably well. Yes, indeed. Since our arrival in this house, after just the first, when there was some frost, we have had such a miraculous mildness under the name of winter, that I rallied as a matter of course, and for the last month there has been no return of the spitting of blood, and no extravagance of cough. I have persisted with cod's liver oil, and I look by no means ill, people assure me, and so I may assure *you*. But I am not very strong, and was a good deal tired after a two hours' drive which I ventured on a week ago in the Bois de Boulogne. The small rooms, and deficiency of air resulting from them, make a long shutting up a more serious thing than I find it in Florence in our acres of apartment. But it is easy to mend strength when only strength is to be mended, and I, for one, get strong again easily. I only hope that the cold is not returning. The air was sharp yesterday and is to-day; but it's February,

and the spring is at the doors, and we may hope with reason. . . .

What do you say of the peace as a final peace? You are not at least vexed, as so many English are, that we can't fight a little for glory to reinstate our reputation. You'll excuse that. Still, I can't help feeling disappointed in the peace — chiefly, perhaps, because I hoped too much from the war. Will nothing be done after all for Italy? nothing for Poland?

You want books. Read About's 'Tolla.' He is a new writer, and his book is exquisite as a transcript of Italian manners. Then read Octave Feuillet. There is much in him.

Will there be war with America, dear Mr. Martin? Never will I believe it till I hear the cannons.

Talking of what we should believe, it appears that Mrs. Trollope has thrown over Hume[1] from some failure in his moral character in Florence. I have had many letters on the subject. I have no doubt that the young man, who is weak and vain, and was exposed to gross flatteries from the various unwise coteries at Florence who took him up, deserves to be thrown over. But his *mediumship* is undisproved, as far as I can understand. It is simply a physical faculty — he is quite an electric wire. At Florence everybody is quarrelling with everybody on the subject. I thought I would tell you.

Penini, the pet, is radiant, and learning French triumphantly. May God bless you! Write to me, dearest Mrs. Martin, and tell me of both of you. Robert's love.

Your ever, ever affectionate

BA.

[1] The notorious medium, prototype of Mr. Browning's 'Sludge.' He subsequently changed his name to Home.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée: February 28, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — Three letters, one on the top of another, and I don't answer. Shame on me. How I have thought of you, to make up! And you write to apologise to *us*, from a dreamy mystical apprehension that we may peradventure have lost eightpence on your account! Well, it would have been awful if we had. And so Providence interposed with a special miracle, and obliged the officials to accept the actual penny stamp for the fourpenny stamp you meant to put, and *we paid just nothing for the terrible letter!* Take heart, therefore, in future, before all hypothetical misfortunes. That's the moral of the tale. . . .

My dear friend, how shall I pull you and make you come to Paris? Madame de Triqueti was here the other day, and spoke of you, and swore she wouldn't help to take rooms for you, unless you came near *her*. As to the two rooms you speak of, I am sure you might have what rooms you pleased now, in this neighbourhood. What would you give? Our present apartment is comfort itself, and except some cold days a short time after you went away, we have really had no winter. The miraculous warmth has saved me, for I was so *felled* in that Rue de Grenelle, I should scarcely have had force against an ordinary cold season. Little Penini has been blossoming like a rose all the time. Such a darling, idle, distracted child he is, not keeping his attention for three minutes together for the hour and a half I teach him, and when I upbraid him for it, throwing himself upon me like a dog, kissing my cheeks and head and hands. 'O you little pet, *dive* me one chance more! I will really be dood,' and learning everything by magnetism, getting on in seven weeks, for instance, to read French quite surprisingly. He has written a poem on the war and the peace, called 'Soldiers going and coming'

which Robert and I thought so remarkable that I sent it to Mr. Forster. Oh, such a darling, that child is! I expect the wings to grow presently.

As for my poem (far below Penini's), I work on steadily and have put in order and transcribed five books, containing in all above six thousand lines ready for the press. I have another book to put together and transcribe, and then must begin the composition part of one or two more books, I suppose. I must be ready for printing by the time we go to England, in June. Robert too is much occupied with 'Sordello,'[1] and we neither of us receive anybody till past four o'clock. I mean that when you have read my new book, you put away all my other poems or most of them, and know me only by the new. Oh, I am so anxious to make it good. I have put much of myself in it — I mean to say, of my soul, my thoughts, emotions, opinions; in other respects, there is not a personal line, of course. It's a sort of poetic art-novel. If it's a failure, there will be the comfort of having made a worthy effort, of having done it as well as I could. Write soon to me, and love us both constantly, as we do you.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] May 2, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — It's very pleasant always to get letters from you, and such kind dear letters, showing that you haven't broken the tether-strings in search of 'pastures new,' weary of our cropped grass.

As for news, you have most of the persons upon whom you care for gossip in your hand now — Mrs. Sartoris, Madame Viardot, Lady Monson, and the Ristori herself. Robert went to see her twice, because Lady Monson led

[1] An attempted revision of the poem, subsequently abandoned, as explained in the preface addressed to M. Milsand in 1863.

him by the hand kindly, and was charmed; thought the Medée very fine, but won't join in the cry about miraculous genius and Rachel out-Racheled. He thinks that as far as the highest and largest development of sensibility can go, she is very great; but that for those grand and sudden *aperçus* which have distinguished actors — such as Kean, for instance — he does not acknowledge them in her. You have heard perhaps how Dickens and others, Macready among the rest, depreciated her. Dickens went so far as to say, I understand, that no English audience would tolerate her defects; which will be put to the proof presently. By the way, you had better not quote Macready on this subject, as he expressed himself unwilling to be quoted on it. . . .

So now we are well again,[1] thank God; and if Robert will but take regular exercise, he will keep so, I hope. As to Penini, he is radiant, and even I have been out walking twice, though a good deal weaker for the winter. More open air, and much more, is necessary to set me growing again, but I shall grow; and meantime I have been working, and am working, at so close a rate that if I lose a day I am lost, which is too close a rate, and makes one feel rather nervous. We see nobody till after four meantime. I have finished (not transcribed) the last book but one, and am now in the very last book, which must be finished with the last days of May. Then the first fortnight of June will be occupied with the transcription of these two last books, and I shall carry the completed work with me to England on the 16th if it please God. Oh, I do hope you won't be disappointed with it — much! Some things you will like certainly, because of the boldness and veracity of them, and others you *may;* I can't be so sure. Robert speaks well of the poetry — encourages me much. But then he has seen only six of the eight books yet.

[1] Mr. Browning and the boy had been suffering from sore throats.

He just now has taken to drawing, and after thirteen days' application has produced some quite startling copies of heads. I am very glad. He can't rest from serious work in light literature, as I can; it wearies him, and there are hours which are on his hands, which is bad both for them and for him. The secret of life is in full occupation, isn't it? This world is not tenable on other terms. So while I lie on the sofa and rest in a novel, Robert has a resource in his drawing; and really, with all his feeling and knowledge of art, some of the mechanical trick of it can't be out of place.

To-night he is going to Madame Mohl, who is well and as vivacious as ever. When Monckton Milnes was in Paris he dined with him in company with Mignet, Cavour, George Sand, and an empty chair in which Lamartine was expected to sit. George Sand had an ivy wreath round her head, and looked like herself. But Lady Monson will talk to you of *her*, better than I can. Now, mind you ask Lady Monson.

As to this Government, I only entreat you *not* to believe any of the mendacious reports set afloat here by a most unworthy Opposition, and carried out by the English 'Athenæum' and other prints. Surely a cause must be bad which is supported by such bad means. In the first place, Béranger did *not* write the verses attributed to him. The internal evidence was sufficient — for Victor Hugo is his personal enemy — to say nothing of the poetry. Then it would be wise, I think, in considering this question, and in taking for granted that the 'literature and talent' of the country are against the Government, to analyse the antecedents and character of the persons who *do* stand out, persons implicated in former Governments, or favoured by former Governments, and whose vanity and prejudices are necessarily contrary to a new order. These persons, either in themselves or their friends, have all been tried in action and found wanting. They have all lost the confidence of

the French people, either by their misconduct or their ill-fortune. They are all cast aside as broken instruments. Under these circumstances they think it desirable to break themselves into the lock, to prevent the turning of another key; they consider it noble and patriotic to stand aside and revile and throw mud, in order to hinder the action of those who *are* acting for the country. In my mind, it is quite otherwise; in my mind and in many other minds — Robert's, for instance! and he began with a most intense hatred of this Government, as you well know. But he does not shut his eyes to all that is noble and admirable going on, on all sides. At last he is sick of the Opposition, he admits. In respect to literature, nothing can be more mendacious than to say there are restraints upon literature. Books of freer opinion are printed now than would ever have been permitted under Louis Philippe, as was reproached against Napoleon by an enemy the other day — books of free opinion, even licentious opinion, on religion and philosophy. *There is restraint in the newspapers only.* That the 'Athenæum' should venture to say that in consequence of the suppression of books compositors are thrown out of work and forced to become transcribers of verses like Béranger's (which are not Béranger's) is so stupendous a falsehood in the face of *statistics which prove a yearly increase in the amount of books printed* that I quite lose my breath, you see, in speaking of it.

The Government is steadily solving, or attempting to solve, that difficult modern problem of possible *Socialism* which has been knocking at all our heads and hearts so long. *That* is its vexation. It is a Government for the *'bus people*, the first settled and serious Government that ever attempted *their* case. Its action is worth all the pedantry of the *doctrinaires* and the middling morals of the *juste milieu;* and I, who am a Democrat, will stand by it as long as I can stand, which isn't very long just now, as I told you.

Dearest Mona Nina, I am so uneasy about dear Mr.

Kenyon, who has been ill again — *is* ill, I fear. He is in London — more's the pity! and Miss Bayley is with him. He gives me sad thoughts.

Do write of yourself. Don't *you* be sad, dearest friend. Oh, I do wish you could have come, and let us love you and talk to you — but on the 16th of June, at any rate.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Paris:] Monday, May 6, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — Your letter makes me feel very uncomfortable. We are in real difficulty about our dear friend Mr. Kenyon, the impulse being, of course, that Robert should go at once, and then the fear coming that it might be an annoyance, an intrusion, something the farthest from what it should be at all. If you had been more explicit — *you* — and we could know what was in your mind when you 'ask' Robert to come, my dear friend, then it would be all easier. If we could but know whether anything passed between you and Miss Bayley on this subject, or whether it is entirely out of your own head that you wish Robert to come. I thought about it yesterday, till I went to bed at eight o'clock with headache. Shall I tell you something in your ear? It is easier for a rich man to enter, after all, into the kingdom of heaven than into the full advantages of real human tenderness. Robert would give much at this moment to be allowed to go to dearest Mr. Kenyon, sit up with him, hold his hand, speak a good loving word to him. This would be privilege to him and to me; and love and gratitude on our parts justified us in *asking* to be allowed to do it. Twice we have asked. The first time a very kind but decided negative was returned to us on the part of our friend. Yesterday we again asked. Yesterday I wrote to say that it would be *consolation* to us if Robert might go — if we might say so without 'teasing.' To-morrow, in the case of Miss

Bayley sending a consent, even on her own part, Robert will set off instantly; but without an encouraging word from her — my dear friend, do you not see that it might really vex dearest Mr. Kenyon? Observe, we have no more right of intruding than you would have if you forced your way upstairs. It's a wretched world, where we can't express an honest affection honestly without half appearing indelicate to ourselves; nothing proves more how the dirt of the world is up to our chins, and I think I had my headache yesterday really and absolutely from simple disgust.

You see, Robert might go to stay till Mr. Edward Kenyon arrives — if it were only till then. I still hope and pray that our dearest friend may rally, to recover at least a tolerable degree of health. He has certain good symptoms; and some of the bad ones, such as the wandering, &c., are constitutional with him under the least fever. You may suppose what painful anxiety we are in about him. Oh, he has been always so good to me — so true, sympathising, and generous a friend!

I shall always have a peculiar feeling to that dear kind Miss Bayley for what she has been to him these latter months.

Now I can't write any more just now. Leighton has been cut up unmercifully by the critics, but bears on, Robert says, not without courage. That you should say 'his picture looked well' was comfort in the general gloom, though even you don't give anything yet that can be called an opinion. Mrs. Sartoris will be much vexed by it all, I am sure.

May God bless you! Write to me. Robert's love with that of

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Did you observe a portrait of Robert by Page? Where have they hung it, and how does it strike you?

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Paris:] 3 Rue du Colisée:
Saturday, June 17, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — I was just going to write to you to beg you to apply to Chapman for Robert's book, when he came to stop me with the newspaper. Thank you, my dearest Fanny, for having thought of me when you had so much weary thought; it was very touching to me that you should. And I am vexed to have missed two days before I told you this — the first by an accident, and the second (to-day) by its being a blank post-day; but you will know by your heart how deeply I have felt and feel for you. May God bless you and love you! If I were as He to comfort, you should be strong and calm at this moment. But what are we to one another in this world? How weak, how far, we all feel in moments like these.

Still, I should like to know that you had some friend near you, to hold your hand and look in your face and be silent, as those are silent who know and feel. When you can write again, tell me how it is with you in this respect, and in others.

So sudden, so sudden! Yet bereavements like these are always sudden to the soul, more or less. All *blows* must needs be sudden. May your health not suffer, dear Fanny. We shall be in London in about a week after the 16th, for we are delayed through my not having finished my poem, which nobody will finish reading perhaps. We go to Mr. Kenyon's house in Devonshire Place, kindly offered to us for the summer. Shall we find you, I wonder, in London?

Yes; there are terrible costs in this world. We get knowledge by losing what we hoped for, and liberty by losing what we loved. But this world is a fragment — or, rather, a segment — and it will be rounded presently, to the completer

satisfaction. Not to doubt *that* is the greatest blessing it gives now. Death is as vain as life; the common impression of it, as false and as absurd. A mere change of circumstances. What more? And how near these spirits are, how conscious, how full of active energy and tender reminiscence and interest, who shall dare to doubt? For myself, I do not doubt at all. If I did, I should be sitting here inexpressibly sad — for myself, not you. . . .

Robert unites with me in affectionate sympathy, and Sarianna was here last night, talking feelingly about you. You shall have Robert's book when we get to England. Think how much I think of you.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Mr. Kenyon has been very ill, and is still in a state occasioning anxiety. He is at the Isle of Wight.

At the end of June the Brownings came back to London, for what was, as it proved, Mrs. Browning's last visit to England. Mr. Kenyon had lent them his house in London, at 39 Devonshire Place, he himself being in the Isle of Wight; but a shadow was thrown over the whole of this visit by the serious and ultimately fatal illness of this dear friend. It was partly in order to see him, and partly because Miss Arabel Barrett had been sent out of town by her father almost as soon as her sister reached Devonshire Place, that about the beginning of September they made an expedition to the Isle of Wight, staying first at Ventnor with Miss Barrett, and subsequently at West Cowes with Mr. Kenyon. All the while Mrs. Browning was actively engaged in seeing 'Aurora Leigh' through the press, and the poem was published just about the time they left England. The letters during this visit are few and mostly unimportant, but the following are of interest,

To Mrs. Jameson

39 Devonshire Place:
Friday morning [July–August 1856].

My dearest Mona Nina, my dear friend, — I am so grieved, so humiliated. If it is possible to forgive me, do.

I received your note, delayed answering it because I fancied Robert might *learn* to accept your kindness about the box after a day's consideration, and so forgot everything bodily, taking one day for another, as is my way lately, in this great crush of too much to do and think of. When I was persuaded to go yesterday morning for the first and last time to the Royal Academy, on the point of closing, I went in like an idiot — that is, an innocent — never once thinking of what I was running the risk of losing; and when I returned and found you gone, you were lost and I in despair. So much in despair that I did not hope once you might come again, and out I went after dinner to see the Edward Kenyons in Beaumont Street, like an innocent — that is, an idiot — and so lost you again. You may forgive me — it is possible — but to forgive myself! it is more difficult. Try not quite to give me up for it. Your note gave me so much pleasure. I *wished* so to see you! For the future I mean to write down engagements in a text-hand, and set them up somewhere in sight; but if I broke through twenty others as shamefully, it would not be with as much real grief to myself as in this fault to my dearest Mona Nina. Do come soon, out of mercy — and magnanimity!

Your *ever* affectionate
BA.

To Mrs. Martin

3 Parade, West Cowes:
September 9, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — Your letter has followed us. We have been in the south of the island, at Ventnor, with

Arabel, and are now in the north with Mr. Kenyon. We came off from London at a day's notice, the Wimpole Street people being sent away abruptly (in consequence, plainly, of our arrival becoming known), and Arabel bringing her praying eyes to bear on Robert, who agreed to go with her and stay for a fortnight. So we have had a happy sorrowful two weeks together, between meeting and parting; and then came here, where our invalid friend called us. Poor Arabel is in low spirits — very — and *aggrieved* with being sent away from town; but the fresh air and *repose* will do her good, in spite of herself, though she swears they won't (in the tone of saying they shan't). She is not by any means strong, and overworks herself in London with schools and Refuges, and societies — does the work of a horse, and *isn't* a horse. Last winter she was quite unwell, as you heard. In spite of which, I did not think her looking ill when I saw her first; and now she looks well, I think — quite as well as she ever does. But she wants a new moral atmosphere — a little society. She is thrown too entirely on her own resources, and her own resources are of somewhat a gloomy character. This is all wrong. It has been partly necessary and a little her fault, at one time. I would give my right hand to take her to Italy; but if I gave right and left, it would not be found possible. My father has remained in London, and may not go to Ventnor for the next week or two, says a letter from Arabel this morning. . . . The very day he heard of our being in Devonshire Place he gave orders that his family should go away. I wrote afterwards, but my letter, as usual, remained unnoticed.

It has naturally begun to dawn upon my child that I have done something very wicked to make my father what he is. Once he came up to me earnestly and said, 'Mama, if you've been very, very naughty — if you've *broken china!*' (his idea of the heinous in crime) — 'I advise you to go into the room and say, "*Papa, I'll be dood.*"' Almost I obeyed the inspiration — almost I felt inclined to go. But there

were considerations — yes, good reasons — which kept me back, and must continue to do so. In fact, the position is perfectly hopeless — perfectly.

We find our dear friend Mr. Kenyon better in some respects than we expected, but I fear in a very precarious state. Our stay is uncertain. We may go at a moment's notice, or remain if he wishes it; and, my proofs being sent post by post, we are able to see to them together, without too much delay. Still, only one-half of the book is done, and the days come when I shall find no pleasure in them — nothing but coughing.

George and my brothers were very kind to Robert at Ventnor, and he is quite touched by it. Also, little Pen made his way into the heart of 'mine untles,' and was carried on their backs up and down hills, and taught the ways of 'English boys,' with so much success that he makes pretensions to 'pluck,' and has left a good reputation behind him. On one occasion he went up to a boy of twelve who took liberties, and exclaimed, 'Don't be impertinent, sir' (doubling his small fist), 'or I will show you that *I'm a boy*.' Of course 'mine untles' are charmed with this 'proper spirit,' and applaud highly. Robert and I begged to suggest to the hero that the 'boy of twelve' might have killed him if he had pleased. 'Never mind,' cried little Pen, 'there would have been somebody to think of *me*, who would have him hanged' (great applause from the uncles). 'But *you* would still be dead,' said Robert remorselessly. 'Well, I don't tare for *that*. It was a beautiful place to die in — close to the sea.'

So you will please to observe that, in spite of being Italians and wearing curls, we can fight to the death on occasion. . . .

Write to me, and say how you both are. Robert's love. We both love you.

Very lovingly yours,

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[West Cowes:] September 13, 1856 [postmark].

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert comes suddenly down on me with news that he is going to write to you, so, though I have been writing letters all the morning, I must throw in a few words. As to keeping Penini at the sea longer, he will have been three weeks at the sea to-morrow, and you must remember how late into the year it is getting — and we with so much work before us! And if Peni recovered his roses at Ventnor, I recovered my cough (from the piercing east winds); but I am better since, and last night slept well. It's far too early for cough, however, in any shape. We have heaps of business to do in London — heaps — and the book is only half-done. Still, we are asked to stay here till three days after Madame Braun's arrival, and it isn't fixed yet when she will arrive; so that I dare say Peni will have a full month of the sea, after all. Then I have a design upon Robert's good-nature, of persuading him to *go round by Taunton* to London (something like going round the earth to Paris), that I may see my poor forsaken sister Henrietta, who wants us to give her a week in her cottage, pathetically bewailing herself that she has no means for the expense of going to London this time — that she has done it twice for me, and can't this time (the purse being low); and unless we go to her, she must do without seeing me, in spite of a separation of four years. So I am anxious to go, of course.

Robert will have told you of our dear friend here. We began by finding him much better than we expected, but gradually the sad truth deepens that he is very ill — oh, it deepens and saddens at once. The face lights up with the warm, generous heart; then the fire drops, and you see the embers. The breath is very difficult — it is hard to live. He leans on the table, saying softly and pathetically 'My God! my God!' Now and then he desires aloud to pass away

and be at rest. I cannot tell you what his kindness is — his consideration is too affecting; kinder he is than ever. Miss Bayley is an excellent nurse — at once gentle and decided — and, if she did but look further than this life and this death, she would be a perfect companion for him. Peni creeps about like a mouse; but he goes out, and he isn't over-tired, as he was at Ventnor. We think he is altogether better in looks and ways.

Your affectionate

Ba.

A short visit to Taunton seems to have been made about the end of September, as anticipated in the last letter, and then, at some time in the course of October, they set out for Florence. But Mrs. Browning, in thus quitting England for the last time, left behind her as a legacy the completed volume of 'Aurora Leigh.' This poem was the realisation of her early scheme, which goes back at least to the year 1844, of writing a novel in verse — a novel modern in setting and ideas, and embodying her own ideals of social and moral progress. And to a large extent she succeeded. As a vehicle of her opinions, the scheme and style of the poem proved completely adequate. She moves easily through the story; she handles her metre with freedom and command; she can say her say without exaggeration or unnatural strain. Further, the opinions themselves, as those who have learnt to know her through her letters will feel sure, are lofty and honourable, and full of a genuine enthusiasm for humanity. As a novel, 'Aurora Leigh' may be open to the criticism that most of the characters fail to impress us with a sense of reality and vitality, and that the hero hardly wins the sympathy from the reader which he is meant to win. But as a poem it is unquestionably a very remarkable work — not so full of permanent poetic spirit as the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese,' not so readily popular as 'The Cry of the Children' or 'Cowper's Grave' — but a highly character-

istic work of one whose character was made up of pure thoughts and noble ideals, which, in spite of the inevitable change of manners and social interests with the lapse of years, will retain into an indefinite future a very considerable intrinsic value as poetry, and a very high rank among the works of its author.

At the time of its publication its success was immediate. The subjects touched on were largely such as always attract interest, because they are open to much controversy; and the freshness of style and originality of conception (for almost the only other novel-poem in the language is 'Don Juan,' which can hardly be regarded as of the same type as 'Aurora Leigh') attracted a multitude of readers. A second edition was required in a fortnight, a third in a few months — a success which must have greatly pleased the authoress, who had put her inmost self into her work, and had laboured hard to leave behind her an adequate representation of her poetic art.

This natural satisfaction was darkened, however, by the death, on December 3, of Mr. Kenyon, in whose house the poem had been completed, and to whom it had been dedicated. Readers of these letters do not require to be told how near and dear a friend he had been to both Mrs. Browning and her husband. During his life his friendship had taken the practical form of allowing them 100*l.* a year, in order that they might be more free to follow their art for its own sake only, and in his will he left 6,500*l.* to Robert Browning and 4,500*l.* to Mrs. Browning. These were the largest legacies in a very generous will — the fitting end to a life passed in acts of generosity and kindness to those in need.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: November 1856.]

Robert says he will wait for me till to-morrow, but I leave my other letters rather and write to you, so sure I

am that we oughtn't to put that off any longer. Dearest Sarianna, I am very much pleased that you like the poem, having feared a little that you might not. M. Milsand will *not*, I prophesy; 'seeing as from a tower the end of all.' The 'Athenæum' is right in supposing that it will be much liked *and* much disliked by people in general, although the press is so far astonishing in its goodwill, and although the extravagance of private letters might well surprise the warmest of my friends. But, patience! In a little while we shall have the other side of the question, and the whips will fall fast after the nosegays. Still, I am surprised, I own, at the amount of success; and that golden-hearted Robert is in ecstasies about it — far more than if it all related to a book of his own. The form of the story, and also something in the philosophy, seem to have caught the crowd. As to the poetry by itself, anything good in *that* repels rather. I am not as blind as Romney, not to perceive this. He had to be blinded, observe, to be made to see; just as Marian had to be dragged through the uttermost debasement of circumstances to arrive at the sentiment of personal dignity. I am sorry, but indeed it seemed necessary.

You tantalise me with your account of 'warm days.' It is warmer with us to-day, but we have had snow on all the mountains, and poor Isa has been half-frozen at her villa. As for me, I have suffered wonderfully little — no more than discomfort and languor. We have piled up the wood in this room and the next, and had a perpetual blaze. Not for ten years has there been in Florence such a November! 'Is this Italy?' says poor Fanny Haworth's wondering face. Still, she likes Florence better than she did. . . .

Is it not strange that dear Mr. Kenyon should have lost his brother by this sudden stroke? Strange and sad? . . . He was suffering too under a relapse when the news came — which, Miss Bayley says, did not dangerously affect him, after all.

Oh, sad and strange! I pity the unfortunate wife more than anyone. She said to me this summer, 'I could not live without him. Let us hope in God that he and I may die at the same moment.' . . .

There's much good in dear M. Milsand's idea for us about Paris and the South of France. Still, I'm rather glad to be quite outside the world for a little, during these first steps of 'Aurora.' Best love to the dear Nonno. May God bless you both!

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

Oh, the spirits! Hate of Hume and belief in the facts are universal here.

To Miss I. Blagden

[About December 1856.]

My dearest Isa, — Just before your note came I had the pleasure of burning my own to you yesterday, which was not called for, as I expected. You would have seen from *that*, that Robert was going to you of his own accord and mine. . . .

I am rather glad you have not seen the 'Athenæum;' the analysis it gives of my poem is so very unfair and partial. You would say the conception was really *null*. It does not console me at all that I should be praised and over-praised, the idea given of the poem remaining so absolutely futile. Even the outside shell of the plan is but half given, and the double action of the metaphysical intention entirely ignored. I protest against it. Still, Robert thinks the article not likely to do harm. Perhaps not. Only one hates to be misrepresented.

So glad I am that Robert was good last night. He told me he had been defending Swedenborg and the spirits, which suggested to me some notion of superhuman virtue on his part. Yes; love him. He is my right 'glory;' and the

'lute and harp' would go for nothing beside him, even if 'Athenæums' spelled one out properly.

Dearest Isa, may God bless you! Let me hear by a word, when Ansuno passes, how you are. Your loving

E. B. B.

The following letter was written almost immediately after the receipt of the news of Mr. Kenyon's death. Mrs. Kinney, to whom it is addressed, was the wife of the Hon. William Burnett Kinney, who was United States Minister at the Court of Sardinia in 1851. After his term of office he removed to Florence, for the purpose of producing a historical work, but he did not live to accomplish it. Mrs. Kinney, who was herself a poet, was also the mother of the well-known American poet and critic, Mr. E. C. Stedman.[1]

To Mrs. W. B. Kinney

Casa Guidi: Friday evening [December 1856].

Your generous sympathy, my dear Mrs. Kinney, would have made me glad yesterday, if I had not been so very, very sad with some news of the day before, telling me of the loss of the loved friend to whom that book is dedicated. So sad I was that I could not lift up my head to write and express to you how gratefully I felt the recognition of your letter. You are most generous — overflowingly generous. If I said I wished to deserve it better, it would be like wishing you less generous; so I won't. I will only thank you from my heart; *that* shall be all I shall say.

Affectionately yours always,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[1] For the substance of this information I am indebted to Mr. Charles Aldrich, to whom the letter was presented by Mrs. Kinney, and through whose kindness it is here printed. The original now forms part of the Aldrich collection in the Historical Department of Iowa, U.S.A.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: December 26, 1856 [postmark].

My ever dear Friend, — To have three letters from you all unanswered seems really to discredit me to myself, while it gives such proof of your kindness and affection. No other excuse is to be offered but the sort of interruption which sadness gives. I really had not the heart to sit down and talk of my 'Aurora,' even in reference to the pleasure and honour brought to me by the expression of your opinion, when the beloved friend associated with the poor book was lost to me in this world, gone where perhaps he no longer sympathises with pleasure or honour of mine, now — for nearly the first time. *Perhaps.* After such separations the sense of *distance* is the thing felt first. And certainly my book at least is naturally saddened to me, and the success of it wholesomely spoiled.

Yet your letter, my dearest Mona Nina, arrived in time to give me great, great pleasure — true pleasure indeed, and most tenderly do I thank you for it. I have had many of such letters from persons loved less, and whose opinions had less weight; and you will like to hear that in a fortnight after publication Chapman had to go to press with the second edition. In fact, the kind of reception given to the book has much surprised me, as I was prepared for an outcry of quite another kind, and extravagances in a quite opposite sense. This has been left, however, to the 'Press,' the 'Post,' and the 'Tablet,' who calls 'Aurora' 'a brazen-faced woman,' and brands the story as a romance in the manner of Frederic Soulié — in reference, of course, to its gross indecency.

I can't leave this subject without noticing (by the way) what you say of the likeness to the catastrophe of 'Jane Eyre.' I have sent to the library here for 'Jane Eyre' (but haven't got it yet) in order to refresh my memory on this

point; but, as far as I do recall the facts, the hero was monstrously disfigured and blinded in a fire the particulars of which escape me, and the circumstance of his being hideously scarred is the thing impressed chiefly on the reader's mind; certainly it remains innermost in mine. Now if you read over again those pages of my poem, you will find that the only injury received by Romney in the fire was from a blow and from the emotion produced by the *circumstances* of the fire. Not only did he *not* lose his eyes in the fire, but he describes the ruin of his house as no blind man could. He was standing there, a spectator. Afterwards he had a fever, and the eyes, the visual nerve, perished, showing no external stain — perished as Milton's did. I believe that a great shock on the nerves might produce such an effect in certain constitutions, and the reader on referring as far back as Marian's letter (when she avoided the marriage) may observe that his eyes had never been strong, that her desire had been to read his notes at night, and save them. For it was necessary, I thought, to the bringing-out of my thought, that Romney should be mulcted in his natural sight. The 'Examiner' saw that. Tell me if, on looking into the book again, you modify your feeling at all.

Dearest Mona Nina, you are well now, are you not? Your last dear letter seems brighter altogether, and seems to promise, too, that quiet in Italy will restore the tone of your spirits and health. Do you know, I almost advise you (though it is like speaking against my heart) to go from Marseilles to Rome straight, and to give us the spring. The spring is beautiful in Florence; and then I should be free to go and see the pictures with you, and enjoy you in the in-door and out-of-door way, both. . . .

You will have heard (we heard it only three days ago) how our kindest friend, who never forgot us, remembered us in his will. The legacy is eleven thousand pounds; six thousand five hundred of which are left to Robert, marking

delicately a sense of trust for which I am especially grateful. Of course, this addition to our income will free us from the pressure which has been upon us hitherto. But oh, how much sadness goes to making every gain in this world! It has been a sad, sad Christmas to me. A great gap is left among friends, and the void catches the eyes of the soul, whichever way it turns. He has been to me in much what my father might have been, and now the place is empty twice over.

You are yet *unconvinced*. You will be convinced one day, I think. Here are wide-awake men (some of them most anti-spiritual to this hour, as to theory) who agree in giving testimony to facts of one order. You shall hear their testimony when you come. As to the 'supernatural,' if you mean by that the miraculous, the suspension of natural law, I certainly believe in it no more than you do. What happens, happens according to a natural law, the development of which only becomes fuller and more observable. The movement, such as it is, is accelerated, and the whole structure of society in America is becoming affected more or less for good or evil, and very often for evil, through the extreme tenacity or slowness of those who ought to be leaders in every revolution of thought, but who, on this subject, are pleased to leave their places to the unqualified and the fanatical. Wise men will be sorry presently. When Faraday was asked to go and see Hume, to see a heavy table lifted without the touch of a finger, he answered that 'he had not time.' Time has its 'revenges.'

I am very glad that dear Mr. Procter has had some of these last benefits of one beloved by so many. What a loss, what a loss! Was there no bequest to yourself? We have heard scarcely anything.

May God bless you, dearest Mona Nina, with the blessing of years old and new.

Robert's love. Your ever attached

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: December 29, 1856.

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I am very, very sorry. I feel for you to the bottom of my heart. But she was a pure spirit, leaning out the way God had marked for her to go, and you had not associated this world too much with her, as if she could have been meant to stay long in it. Always you felt that she was about to go — did you not, dear friend? — and so that she does not stay cannot be an astonishment to you. The pain is the same; only it can't be the bitter, unnatural pain of certain separations. Her sweetness has gone to the sweet, her lovely nature to the lovely; no violence was done to her in carrying her home. May God enable you to dwell on this till you are satisfied — glad, and not sorry. That the spirits do not go far, and that they love us still, has grown to me surer and surer. And yet, how death shakes us!

Yes indeed. I, too, have been very, very sad. This Christmas has come to me like a cloud. I can scarcely fancy England without that bright face and sympathetic hand, that princely nature, in which you might put your trust more reasonably than in princes. These ten years back he has stood to me almost in my father's place; and now the place is empty doubly. Since the birth of my child (seven years since) he has allowed us — rather, insisted on our accepting (for my husband was loth) — a hundred a year, and without it we should have often been in hard straits. His last act was to leave us eleven thousand pounds; and I do not doubt but that, if he had not known our preference of a simple mode of life and a freedom from worldly responsibilities (born artists as we both are), the bequest would have been greater still. As it is, we shall be relieved from pecuniary pressure, and your affectionateness will be glad to hear this, but I shall have more comfort from the

consideration of it presently than I can at this instant, when the loss, the empty chair, the silent voice, the apparently suspended sympathy, must still keep painfully uppermost.

You will wonder at a paragraph from the 'Athenæum,' which Robert thought out of taste until he came to understand the motive of it — that there had been (two days previous to its appearance) a brutal attack on the *will*, to the effect that literary persons had been altogether overlooked in the dispositions of the testator, in consequence of his being a disappointed literary pretender himself. Therefore we were brought forward, you see, together with Barry Cornwall and Dr. Southey, producing a wrong impression on the other side — only I can't blame the 'Athenæum' writer for it; nor can anyone, I think. The effect, however, to ourselves is most uncomfortable, as we are overwhelmed with 'congratulations' on all sides, just as if we had not lost a dear, tender, faithful friend and relative — just as if, in fact, some stranger had made us a bequest as a tribute to our poetry. People are so obtuse in this world — as Robert says, so '*dense*'; as Lord Brougham says, so '*crass*.'

Whatever may be your liking or disliking of 'Aurora Leigh,' you will like to hear that it's a great success, and in a way which I the least expected, for a fortnight after the day of publication it had to go to press for the second edition. The extravagances written to me about that book would make you laugh, if you were in a laughing mood; and the strange thing is that the press, the daily and weekly press, upon which I calculated for furious abuse, has been, for the most part, furious the other way. The 'Press' newspaper, the 'Post,' and the 'Tablet' are exceptions; but for the rest, the 'Athenæum' is the coldest in praising. It's a puzzle to me, altogether. I don't know upon what principle the public likes and dislikes poems. Any way, it is very satisfactory at the end of a laborious work (for much hard working and hard thinking have gone to it) to hear it thus

recognised, however I must think, with some bitterness, that the beloved and sympathetic friend to whom it was dedicated scarcely lived to know what would have given him so much pleasure as this.

Dearest Mrs. Martin, mind you tell me the truth exactly. I should like much to have pleased you and Mr. Martin, but I like the truth *best* of all from you. . . .

Dearest friends, keep kind thoughts of

Your affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: January 1857.]

My dearest Sarianna, — A great many happy years to you, and also to the dear Nonno. I am glad, for my part, to be out of the last, which has been gloomy and almost embittering to me personally; but we must throw our burdens behind our backs as far as possible, and be cheerful for the rest of the road. If Robert alone wrote about 'Aurora,' I won't leave it to him to be alone grateful to dear M. Milsand for his extraordinary kindness. Do tell him, with my love, that I could not have expected it, even from himself — which is saying much. Most thankfully I leave everything to his discretion and judgment. On this subject I have been, from the beginning, divided between my strong desire of being translated and my strong fear of being ill-translated. Harrison Ainsworth's novels are quite one thing, and a poem of mine quite another. Oh yes! and yet, so great is my faith in Milsand, that the touch of his hand and the overseership of his eyes must tranquillise me. I am simply grateful.

Peni has been overwhelmed with gifts this year. I gave him on Christmas Day (by his own secret inspiration) 'a sword with a blade to dazzle the eyes;' Robert, a box of tools and carpenter's bench; and we united in a 'Robinson Crusoe,' who was well received. Then from others he had

sleeve-studs, a silver pencil-case, books, &c. According to his own magniloquent phrase, he was '*exceptionally* happy.' He has taken to long words; I heard him talking of '*evidences*' the other day. Poor little Pen! it's the more funny that he has by no means yet left off certain of his babyisms of articulation, and the combined effects are curious. You asked of Ferdinando.[1] Peni's attachment for Ferdinando is undiminished. Ferdinando can't be found fault with, even in gentleness, without a burst of tears on Peni's part. Lately I ventured to ask not to be left quite alone in the house on certain occasions; and though I spoke quite kindly, there was Peni in tears, assuring me that we ought to have another servant to open the door, for that 'poor Ferdinando had a great deal too much work'! When I ventured to demur to that, the next charge was, 'plainly I did not love Ferdinando as much as I loved Penini,' which I could not deny; and then with passionate sobs Peni said that 'I was very unjust indeed.' 'Indeed, indeed, dear mama, you *are* unjust! Ferdinando does everything for you, and I do nothing, except tease you, and even' (sobbing) 'I am sometimes a very naughty boy.' I had to mop up his tears with my pocket-handkerchief, and excuse myself as well as I could from the moral imputation of loving Peni better than Ferdinando.

We have been very glad in a visit from Frederick Tennyson. . . . God bless you! Robert won't wait.

Your ever attached

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: February 2, 1857 [postmark].

My dearest Mona Nina, — To begin (lest I forget before the ending), don't mind the sugar-tongs, if you have not actually bought them, inasmuch as, to my astonishment,

[1] The husband of Wilson, Mrs. Browning's maid.

Wilson has found a pair in Florence, marking the progress of civilisation in this South. In Paris last winter we sought in vain. There was nothing between one's fingers and real silver — too expensive for poets. But now we are supplied splendidly — and at the cost of five pauls, let me tell you.

Always delighted I am to have your letters, even when you don't tell me as touchingly as in this that mine are something to you. Do I not indeed love you and *sympathise* with you fully and deeply? Yes, indeed. On one subject I am afraid to touch. But I *know* why it is you feel so long, so unduly — so morbidly, in a sense. People in general, knowing themselves to be innocently made to suffer, would take comfort in righteous indignation and justified contempt: but to you the indignation and contempt would be the worst part of suffering; you can't bear it, and you are in a strait between the two. In fact it relieves you rather to take part against yourself, and to conclude on the whole that there's something really bad in your calling on the pure Heavens for vengeance. Yes, that's *you*. You sympathise tenderly with your executioner. . . .

And as for the critics — yes, indeed, I agree with you that I have no reason to complain. More than that, I confess to you that I am entirely astonished at the amount of reception I have met with — I who expected to be put in the stocks and pelted with the eggs of the last twenty years' 'singing birds' as a disorderly woman and freethinking poet! People have been so kind that, in the first place, I really come to modify my opinions somewhat upon their conventionality, to see the progress made in freedom of thought. Think of quite decent women taking the part of the book in a sort of *effervescence* which I hear of with astonishment. In fact, there has been an enormous quantity of extravagance talked and written on the subject, and I *know it* — oh, I know it. I wish I deserved some things — some things; I wish it were all true. But I see too distinctly what I *ought* to have written. Still, it is nearer

the mark than my former efforts — fuller, stronger, more sustained — and one may be encouraged to push on to something worthier, for I don't feel as if I had done yet — no indeed. I have had from Leigh Hunt a very pleasant letter of twenty pages, and I think I told you of the two from John Ruskin. In America, also, there's great success, and the publisher is said to have shed tears over the proofs (perhaps in reference to the hundred pounds he had to pay for them), and the critics congratulate me on having worked myself clear of all my affectations, mannerisms, and other morbidities.

Even 'Blackwood' is not to be complained of, seeing that the writer evidently belongs to an elder school, and judges from his own point of view. He is wrong, though, even in classical matters, as it seems to *me*.

I heard one of Thackeray's lectures, the one on George the Third, and thought it better than good — fine and touching. To what is it that people are objecting? At any rate, they crowd and pay.

Ah yes. You appreciate Robert; you know what is in his poetry. Certainly there is no pretension in *me* towards that profound suggestiveness, and I thank you for knowing it and saying it.

There is a real *poem* being lived between Mr. Kirkup and the 'spirits,' so called.[1] If I were to *write* it in a poem, I should beat 'Aurora' over and over. And such a tragic face the old man has, with his bleak white beard. Even Robert is touched.

Best love from him and your

Ever attached

Ba.

[1] An odd commentary on this 'poem' may be found in Mrs. Orr's *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 219.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: February [1857].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — I needn't say how much, how very much, pleasure your letter gave me. That the poem should really have touched you, reached you, with whatever drawbacks, is a joy. And then that Mr. Martin should have read it with any sort of interest! It was more than I counted on, as you know. Thank you, dearest Mrs. Martin — thank both of you for so much sympathy.

In respect to certain objections, I am quite sure you do me the justice to believe that I do not willingly give cause for offence. Without going as far as Robert, who holds that I 'couldn't be coarse if I tried,' (only that!) you will grant that I don't habitually dabble in the dirt; it's not the way of my mind or life. If, therefore, I move certain subjects in this work, it is because my conscience was first moved in me not to ignore them. What has given most offence in the book, more than the story of Marian — far more! — has been the reference to the condition of women in our cities, which a woman oughtn't to refer to, by any manner of means, says the conventional tradition. Now I have thought deeply otherwise. If a woman ignores these wrongs, then may women as a sex continue to suffer them; there is no help for any of us — let us be dumb and die. I have spoken therefore, and in speaking have used plain words — words which look like blots, and which you yourself would put away — words which, if blurred or softened, would imperil perhaps the force and righteousness of the moral influence. Still, I certainly will, when the time comes, go over the poem carefully, and see where an offence can be got rid of without loss otherwise. The second edition was issued so early that Robert would not let me alter even a comma, would not let me look between the pages in order to the least altera-

tion. He said (the truth) that my head was dizzy-blind with the book, and that, if I changed anything, it would be probably for the worse; like arranging a room in the dark. Oh no. Indeed he is not vexed that you should say what you do. On the contrary, he was *pleased* because of the much more that you said. As to your friend with the susceptible 'morals'—well, I could not help smiling indeed. I am assured too, by a friend of my own, that the 'mamas of England' in a body refuse to let their daughters read it. Still, the daughters emancipate themselves and *do*, that is certain; for the number of *young* women, not merely 'the strong-minded' as a sect, but pretty, affluent, happy women, surrounded by all the temptations of English respectability, that cover it with the most extravagant praises is surprising to me, who was not prepared for that particular kind of welcome. It's true that there's a quantity of hate to balance the love, only I think it chiefly seems to come from the less advanced part of society. (See how modest that sounds! But you will know what I mean.) I mean, from persons whose opinions are not in a state of growth, and who do not like to be disturbed from a settled position. Oh, that there are faults in the book, no human being knows so well as I; defects, weaknesses, great gaps of intelligence. Don't let me stop to recount them.

The review in 'Blackwood' proves to be by Mr. Aytoun; and coming from the camp of the enemy (artistically and socially) cannot be considered other than generous. It is not quite so by the 'North British,' where another poet (Patmore), who knows more, is somewhat depreciatory, I can't help feeling.

Now will you be sick of my literature; but you liked to hear, you said. If you would see, besides, I would show you what George sent me the other day, a number of the 'National Magazine,' with the most hideous engraving, from a medallion, you could imagine—the head of a 'strong-minded' giantess on the neck of a bull, and my name underneath! Penini

said, 'It's not a bit like; it's too old, and *not half so pretty*' — which was comforting under the trying circumstance, if anything could comfort one in despair. . . .

Your ever most affectionate

BA.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: February 1857.]

My dearest Sarianna, — I am delighted, and so is Robert, that you should have found what pleases you in the clock. Here is Penini's letter, which takes up so much room that I must be sparing of mine — and, by the way, if you consider him improved in his writing, give the praise to Robert, who has been taking most patient pains with him indeed. You will see how the little curly head is turned with carnival doings. So gay a carnival never was in our experience — for until last year (when we were absent) all masks had been prohibited, and now everybody has eaten of the tree of good and evil till not an apple was left. Peni persecuted me to let him have a domino, with tears and embraces; he '*almost never* in all his life had had a domino,' and he would like it so. Not a black domino — no; he hated black — but a blue domino, trimmed with pink! that was his taste. The pink trimming I coaxed him out of; but for the rest I let him have his way, darling child; and certainly it answered, as far as the overflow of joy in his little heart went. Never was such delight. Morning and evening there he was in the streets, running Wilson out of breath, and lost sight of every ten minutes. 'Now, Lily, I do *pray* you not to call out "Penini! Penini!"' Not to be known was his immense ambition. Oh, of course he thought of nothing else. As to lessons, there was an absolute absence of wits. All Florence being turned out into the streets in one gigantic pantomime, one couldn't expect people to be wiser in-doors than out. For my part, the universal madness reached me sitting by the fire (whence I had not stirred for three

months); and you will open your eyes when I tell you that I went (in domino and masked) to the great opera ball. Yes, I did really. Robert, who had been invited two or three times to other people's boxes, had proposed to return this kindness by taking a box himself at the opera this night and entertaining two or three friends with *gallantina* and champagne. Just as he and I were lamenting the impossibility of my going, on that very morning the wind changed, the air grew soft and mild, and he maintained that I might and should go. There was no time to get a domino of my own (Robert himself had a beautiful one made, and I am having it metamorphosed into a black silk gown for myself!), so I sent out and hired one, buying the mask. And very much amused I was. I like to see these characteristic things. (I shall never rest, Sarianna, till I risk my reputation at the Bal de l'Opéra at Paris.) Do you think I was satisfied with staying in the box? No, indeed. Down I went, and Robert and I elbowed our way through the crowd to the remotest corner of the ball below. Somebody smote me on the shoulder and cried 'Bella mascherina!' and I answered as imprudently as one feels under a mask. At two o'clock in the morning, however, I had to give up and come away (being overcome by the heavy air), and ingloriously left Robert and our friends to follow at half-past four. Think of the refinement and gentleness — yes, I must call it *superiority* — of this people, when no excess, no quarrelling, no rudeness nor coarseness can be observed in the course of such wild masked liberty. Not a touch of license anywhere. And perfect social equality! Ferdinando side by side in the same ballroom with the Grand Duke, and no class's delicacy offended against! For the Grand Duke went down into the ballroom for a short time. The boxes, however, were dear. We were on a third tier, yet paid 2*l.* 5*s.* English, besides entrance money. I think that, generally speaking, theatrical amusements are cheaper in Paris, in spite of apparent cheapnesses here. The pit here and stalls

are cheap. But 'women in society' can't go there, it is said; and you must take a whole box, if you want two seats in a box — which seems to me monstrous. People combine generally. . . .

Ever affectionate

Ba.

I meant to write only a word — and see! May it not be overweight.

To Mrs. Jameson

Florence: April 9 [1857].

Dearest Madonna, — I must not wait, lest I miss you in your transit to Naples; thank you for your dear letter, then. The weather has burst suddenly into summer (though it rains a little this morning), and I have been let out of prison to drive in the Cascine and to Bellosguardo. Beautiful, beautiful Florence. How beautiful at this time of year! The trees stand in their 'green mist' as if in a trance of joy. Oh, I do hope nothing will drive us out of our Paradise this summer, for I seem to hate the North more 'unnaturally' than ever.

Mrs. Stowe has just arrived, and called here yesterday and this morning, when Robert took her to see the salvators at the end of our street. I like her better than I thought I should — that is, I find more refinement in her voice and manner — no rampant Americanisms. Very simple and gentle, with a sweet voice; undesirous of shining or *poser*-ing, so it seems to me. Never did lioness roar more softly (that is quite certain); and the temptations of a sudden enormous popularity should be estimated, in doing her full justice. She is nice-looking, too; and there's something strong and copious and characteristic in her dusky wavy hair. For the rest, the brow has not very large capacity; and the mouth wants something both in frankness and sensitiveness, I should say. But what can one see in

a morning visit? I must wait for another opportunity. She spends to-morrow evening with us, and talks of remaining in Florence till the end of next week — so I shall see and hear more. Her books are not so much to me, I confess, as the fact is, that she above all women (yes, and men of the age) has moved the world — and *for good.*

I hear that Mrs. Gaskell is coming, whom I am sure to like and love. I know *that* by her letters, though I was stupid or idle enough to let our correspondence go by; and by her books, which I earnestly admire. How anxious I am to see the life of Charlotte Brontë! But we shall have to wait for it here.

Dearest friend, you don't mention Ma^dme de Goethe, but I do hope you will have her with you before long. The good to you will be immense, and after friendship (and reason) the sun and moon and earth of Italy will work for you in their places. May God grant to us all that you may be soon strong enough to throw every burden behind you. The griefs that are incurable are those which have our own sins festering in them. . . .

On April 6 we had tea out of doors, on the terrace of our friend Miss Blagden in her villa up [at] Bellosguardo (not exactly Aurora Leigh's,[1] mind). You seem to be lifted up above the world in a divine ecstasy. Oh, what a vision!

[1] See *Aurora Leigh*, p. 276:

'I found a house at Florence on the hill
Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower which keeps
A post of double observation o'er
That valley of Arno (holding as a hand
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.
No sun could die nor yet be born unseen
By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve

Have you read Victor Hugo's 'Contemplations'? We are doing so at last. As for *me*, my eyes and my heart melted over them — some of the personal poems are overcoming in their pathos; and nothing more exquisite in poetry can express deeper pain. . . .

Robert comes back. He says that Mrs. Stowe was very simple and pleasant. He likes her. So shall I, I think. She has the grace, too, to admire our Florence.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

I dare say the illustrations will be beautiful. But you are at work on a new book, are you not?

The mention of the 'Contemplations' of Victor Hugo in the preceding letter supplies a clue to the date of the following draft of an appeal to the Emperor Napoleon on behalf of the poet, which has been found among Mrs. Browning's papers. An endorsement on the letter says that it was not sent, but it is none the less worthy of being printed.

> Were magnified before us in the pure
> Illimitable space and pause of sky,
> Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
> Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall
> Of the garden drops the mystic floating grey
> Of olive trees (with interruptions green
> From maize and vine), until 'tis caught and torn
> Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses
> Which signs the way to Florence. Beautiful
> The city lies along the ample vale,
> Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street,
> The river trailing like a silver cord
> Through all, and curling loosely, both before
> And after, over the whole stretch of land
> Sown whitely up and down its opposite slopes
> With farms and villas.'

Miss Blagden's villa was the Villa Brochion, which is alluded to elsewhere in the letters.

To the Emperor Napoleon

[April 1857].

Sire, — I am only a woman, and have no claim on your Majesty's attention except that of the weakest on the strongest. Probably my very name as the wife of an English poet, and as named itself a little among English poets, is unknown to your Majesty. I never approached my own sovereign with a petition, nor am skilled in the way of addressing kings. Yet having, through a studious and thoughtful life, grown used to great men (among the dead, at least), I cannot feel entirely at a loss in speaking to the Emperor Napoleon.

And I beseech you to have patience with me while I supplicate you. It is not for myself nor for mine.

I have been reading with wet eyes and a swelling heart (as many who love and some who hate your Majesty have lately done) a book called the 'Contemplations' of a man who has sinned deeply against you in certain of his political writings, and who expiates rash phrases and unjustifiable statements in exile in Jersey. I have no personal knowledge of this man; I never saw his face; and certainly I do not come now to make his apology. It is, indeed, precisely because he cannot be excused that, I think, he might worthily be forgiven. For this man, whatever else he is not, is a great poet of France, and the Emperor, who is the guardian of her other glories, should remember him and not leave him out. Ah, sire, what was written on 'Napoleon le Petit' does not touch your Majesty; but what touches you is, that no historian of the age should have to write hereafter, 'While Napoleon III. reigned, Victor Hugo lived in exile.' What touches you is, that when your people count gratefully the men of commerce, arms, and science secured by you to France, no voice shall murmur, 'But where is our poet?' What touches you is, that, however statesmen and politicians may justify his exclusion, it may

draw no sigh from men of sentiment and impulse, yes, and from women like myself. What touches you is, that when your own beloved young prince shall come to read these poems (and when you wish him a princely nature, you wish, sire, that such things should move him), he may exult to recall that his imperial father was great enough to overcome this great poet with magnanimity.

Ah, sire, you are great enough! You can allow for the peculiarity of the poetical temperament, for the temptations of high gifts, for the fever in which poets are apt to rage and suffer beyond the measure of other men. You can consider that when they hate most causelessly there is a divine love in them somewhere; and that when they see most falsely they are loyal to some ideal light. Forgive this enemy, this accuser, this traducer. Disprove him by your generosity. Let no tear of an admirer of his poetry drop upon your purple. Make an exception of him, as God made an exception of him when He gave him genius, and call him back *without condition* to his country and his daughter's grave.

I have written these words without the knowledge of any. Naturally I should have preferred, as a woman, to have addressed them through the mediation of the tender-hearted Empress Eugénie; but, a wife myself, I felt it would be harder for her Majesty to pardon an offence against the Emperor Napoleon, than it could be for the Emperor.

And I am driven by an irresistible impulse to your Majesty's feet to ask this grace. It is a woman's voice, sire, which dares to utter what many yearn for in silence. I have believed in Napoleon III. Passionately loving the democracy, I have understood from the beginning that it was to be served throughout Europe in you and by you. I have trusted you for doing greatly. I will trust you, besides, for pardoning nobly. You will be Napoleon in this also.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Shortly after this date, on April 17, Mrs. Browning's father died. In the course of the previous summer an attempt made by a relative to bring about a reconciliation between him and his daughters was met with the answer that they had 'disgraced his family;' and, although he professed to have 'forgiven' them, he refused all intercourse, removed his family out of town when the Brownings came thither, and declined to give his daughter Henrietta's address to Mr. Kenyon's executor, who was instructed to pay her a small legacy. A further attempt at reconciliation was made by Mrs. Martin only a few months before his death, but had no better success. His pride stood in the way of his forgiveness to the end.

On receiving the news of his death, the following letter was written by Robert Browning to Mrs. Martin; but it was not until two months later that Mrs. Browning was able to bring herself to write to anyone outside her own family.

Robert Browning to Mrs. Martin

Florence: May 3, 1857.

My dear Mrs. Martin, — Truest thanks for your letter. We had the intelligence from George last Thursday week, having been only prepared for the illness by a note received from Arabel the day before. Ba was sadly affected at first; miserable to see and hear. After a few days tears came to her relief. She is now very weak and prostrated, but improving in strength of body and mind: I have no fear for the result. I suppose you know, at least, the very little that we know; and how unaware poor Mr. Barrett was of his imminent death: 'he bade them,' says Arabel, 'make him comfortable for the night, but a moment before the last.' And he had dismissed her and her aunt about an hour before, with a cheerful or careless word about 'wishing them good night.' So it is all over now, all

hope of better things, or a kind answer to entreaties such as I have seen Ba write in the bitterness of her heart. There must have been something in the organisation, or education, at least, that would account for and extenuate all this; but it has caused grief enough, I know; and now here is a new grief not likely to subside very soon. Not that Ba is other than reasonable and just to herself in the matter: she does not reproach herself at all; it is all mere grief, as I say, that this should have been *so;* and I sympathise with her there.

George wrote very affectionately to tell me; and dear, admirable Arabel sent a note the very next day to prove to Ba that there was nothing to fear on her account. Since then we have heard nothing. The funeral was to take place in Herefordshire. We had just made up our minds to go on no account to England this year. Ba felt the restraint on her too horrible to bear. I will, or she will, no doubt, write and tell you of herself; and you must write, dear Mrs. Martin, will you not?

Kindest regard to Mr. Martin and all.

Yours faithfully ever,

ROBERT BROWNING.

E. B. Browning to Mrs. Martin

Florence: July 1, [1857].

Thank you, thank you from my heart, my dearest friend — this poor heart, which has been so torn and mangled, — for your dear, tender sympathy, whether expressed in silence or in words. Of the past I cannot speak. You understand, yes, you understand. And when I say that you understand (and feel that you do), it is an expression of belief in the largeness of your power of understanding, seeing that few *can* understand — few can. There has been great bitterness — great bitterness, which is natural; and some recoil against myself, more, perhaps, than is quite rational. Now I am

much better, calm, and not despondingly calm (as, off and on, I have been), able to read and talk, and keep from vexing my poor husband, who has been a good deal tried in all these things. Through these three months you and what you told me touched me with a thought of comfort — came the nearest to me of all. May God bless you and return it to you a hundredfold, dear dear friend!

I believe *hope* had died in me long ago of reconciliation in this world. Strange, that what I called 'unkindness' for so many years, in departing should have left to me such a sudden desolation! And yet, it is not strange, perhaps.

No, I cannot write any more. You will understand. . . .

We shall be in Paris next summer. This year we remain quietly where we are. Presently we may creep to the seaside or into the mountains to avoid the great heats, but no further. My temptation is to lie on the sofa, and never stir nor speak, only I don't give up, be certain. I drive out for two or three hours on most days, and I hear Peni's lessons, and am good and obedient. If I could get into hard regular work of some kind, it would be excellent for me, I know; but the 'flesh is weak.' Oh, no, to have gone to England this summer would have *helped nobody*, and would have been very overcoming to *me*. I was not fit for it, indeed, and Robert was averse on his own account. . . .

May God bless you both, dearest friends. My little Penini is bright and well. I have begun to teach him German. I do hope you won't fatigue yourselves too much at Colwall. Enjoy the summer and the roses, and be well, be well. We shall meet next year. . . .

Once more, goodbye.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

Ba.

Robert's love as ever.

This is the first letter I have written to anyone out

of my own family. I hate writing, and can't help being stupid.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: [about July 1857].

I write soon, you see, dearest Fanny. I thank you for all, but I do beseech you, *dear*, not to say a word more to me of what is said of me. The truth is, I am made of paper, and it tears me. Do not, dear. Make no reference to things personal to myself. As far as I could read and understand, it was absurd, perfectly *ungenuine*. I shall say nothing to anybody. I have torn that sheet. Do not refer to the subject to Isa Blagden. And there — I have done.

No — I thank you; and I know it was your kindness entirely. Will you, if you love me, *not* touch on the subject (I mean on the personal thing to myself) in your next letters, not even by saying that you were sorry you did once touch on them. I know how foolish and morbid I must seem to you. So I am made, and I can't help my idiosyncrasies.

Now don't mistake me. Tell me all about the spirits, only not about what they say of *me*. I am very interested. The drawback is, that without any sort of doubt they *personate falsely*.

We are seething in the heat. The last three days have been a composition of Gehenna and Paradise. It is a perpetual steam bath. Yet Robert and I have not finished our plans for escaping. Mrs. Jameson is here still, recovering her health and spirits. The Villa hospitality goes on as usual, and the evening before last we had tea on the terrace by a divine sunset, with a favoring breath or two. Only even there we wished for Lazarus's finger.

Certainly Florence will not be bearable many days longer. Write to me though, at Florence as usual. . . .

It is said that Hume, who is back again in Paris and under the shadow of the Emperor's wing, has been the

means of an extraordinary manifestation, two spiritual figures, male and female, who were *recognised* by their friends. Five or six persons (including the medium) fainted away at this apparition. It happened in Paris, lately.

Yes, I mistrust the mediums less than I do the spirits who write. Tell me. . . .

Write and tell me everything *with exceptions* such as I have set down. And forgive my poor brittle body, which shakes and breaks. May God love you, dear.

Yours in true affection,

Ba.

At the end of July, Florence had become unbearable, and the Brownings removed, for the third time, to the Bagni di Lucca, whither they were followed by some of their friends, notably Miss Blagden and Mr. Robert Lytton. Unfortunately, their holiday was marred by the dangerous illness of Lytton, which not only kept them in great anxiety for a considerable time, but also entailed much labour in nursing on Mr. Browning and Miss Blagden. Besides Mrs. Browning's letters, a letter from her husband to his sister is given below, containing an account of the earlier stages of the illness.

Robert Browning to Miss Browning

Bagni di Lucca: August 18, [1857].

Dearest, — We arrived here on the 30th last, and two or three days after were followed by Miss Blagden, Miss Bracken, and Lytton — all for our sake: they not otherwise wanting to come this way. Lytton arrived unwell, got worse soon, and last Friday week was laid up with a sort of nervous fever, caused by exposure to the sun, or something, acting on his nervous frame: since then he has been very ill in bed — doctor, anxiety &c. as you may suppose: they are exactly opposite us, at twelve or fifteen feet distance only.

Through sentimentality and economy combined, Isa would have no nurse (an imbecile arrangement), and all has been done by her, with me to help: I have sate up four nights out of the last five, and sometimes been there nearly all day beside. . . .[1] He is much better to-day, taken broth, and will, I hope, have no relapse, poor fellow: imagine what a pleasant holiday we all have! Otherwise the place is very beautiful, and cool exceedingly. We have done nothing notable yet, but all are very well, Peni particularly so: as for me, I bathe in the river, a rapid little mountain stream, every morning at 6½, and find such good from the practice that I shall continue it, and whatever I can get as like it as possible, to the end of my days, I hope: the strength of all sorts therefrom accruing is wonderful: I thought the shower baths perfection, but this is far above it. . . . I was so rejoiced to hear from you, and think you so wise in staying another month. I sent the 'Ath.' to 151 R. de G. Kindest love to papa: we can't get news from England, but the Americans have paid up the rest of the money for 'Aurora:' by the bye, in this new book of Ruskin's, the drawing book,[2] he says '"Aurora Leigh" is the finest poem written in any language this century.' There is a review of it, which I have not yet got, in the 'Rivista di Firenze' of this month. God bless you. I will write very soon again. Do you write at once. Ba will add a word. How fortunate about the books! How is Milsand? Pray always remember my best love to him.

E. B. Browning to Miss Browning

[Same date.]

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert will have told you, I dare say, what a heavy time we have had here with poor Lytton.

[1] A line or two has been cut off the bottom of the sheet at this place.

[2] The *Elements of Drawing*.

It was imprudent of him to come to Florence at the hottest of the year, and to expose himself perfectly unacclimated ; and the chance by which he was removed here just in time to be nursed was happy for him and all of us. We have had great heat in the days even here, of course — no blotting out, even by mountains, of the Italian sun ; but the cool nights extenuate very much — refresh and heal. Now I do hope the corner is turned of the illness. Isa Blagden has been devoted, sitting up night after night, and Robert has sate up four nights that she might not really die at her post. There is nothing *infectious* in the fever, so don't be afraid. Robert is quite well, with good appetite and good spirits, and Peni is like a rose possessed by a fairy. They both bathe in the river, and profit (as I am so glad you do). Not that it's a real river, though it has a name, the *Lima*. A mere mountain stream, which curls itself up into holes in the rocks to admit of bathing. Then, as far as they have been able on account of Lytton, they have had riding on donkeys and mountain ponies, Peni as bold as a lion.

[*The last words of the letter, with the signature, have been cut off.*]

To Mrs. Jameson

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca: August 22, [1857].

As you bid me write, my dear friend, about Lytton, I write, but I grieve to say we are still very uneasy about him. For sixteen days he has been prostrate with this gastric fever, and the disease is not baffled, though the pulse is not high nor the head at all affected. Dr. Trotman, however, is uncheerful about him — is what medical men call '*cautious*' in giving an opinion, observing that, though *at present* he is not in danger, the delicacy of his constitution gives room for great apprehension in the case of the least turning towards relapse. Robert has been up with him

during eight nights, and Isa Blagden eight nights. Nothing can exceed her devotion to him by night or day. We have persuaded her, however, at last to call in a nurse for the nights. I am afraid for Robert, and in fact a trained nurse can do certain things better than the most zealous and tender friend can pretend to do. You may suppose how saddened we all are. Dear Lytton! At intervals he talks and can hear reading, but this morning he is lower again. In fact, from the first he has been very apprehensive about himself — inclined to talk of divine things, of the state of his soul and God's love, and to hold this life but slackly.

I feel I am writing a horrible account to you. You will conclude the worst from it, and that is what I don't want you to do. The pulse has never been high, and is now much lower, and if he can be kept from a relapse he will live. I pray God he may live. He is not altered in the face, and Dr. Trotman reiterated this morning, 'There *is* no danger at present.'

You are better. I thank God for it. Oh, yes, it is very beautiful, that cathedral. The weather here is cool and enjoyable by day even. At nights it is really cold, and I *have* thought of a blanket once or twice as of a thing tolerable. I will write again when there is a change. The course of the fever may extend to six days more.

Your ever most affectionate

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Thursday, [end of August 1857].

Dearest Friend, — I think it better to inclose to you this letter which has come to your address. Thank you for your kind words about Lytton, which will be very soothing to him. He continues better, and is preparing to take his first drive to-day, for half an hour, with his *nurse* and Robert. See how weak he must be, and the hollow cheeks and temples remain as signs of the past. Still, he is conva-

lescent, and begins to think of poems and apple puddings in a manner other than celestial. I do thank God that our anxieties have ended so.

Robert bathes in the river every morning, which does him great good; besides the rides at mornings and evenings on mountain ponies with Annette Bracken and a Crimean hero (as Mrs. Stisted has it), who has turned up at the hotel, with one leg and so many agreeable and amiable qualities that everybody is charmed with him.

Robert had a letter from Chapman yesterday. Not much news. He speaks of two penny papers, sold lately, after making the fortune of their proprietors, for twenty-five and thirty-five thousand pounds. If Robert 'could but write bad enough,' says the learned publisher, he should recommend one of them. But even Charles Reade was found too good, and the sale fell ten thousand in a few weeks on account of a serial tale of his, so he had to make place to his *worses*. Chapman hears of a 'comprehensive review' being about to appear in the 'Westminster' on 'Aurora,' whether for or against he cannot tell. The third edition sells well.

So happy I am to hear that Mr. Procter's son is safe. We saw his name in the 'Galignani,' and were alarmed. Lytton has heard from Forster, but I had no English news from the letter. I get letters from my sisters which make me feel '*froissée*' all over, except that they seem pretty well. My eldest brother has returned from Jamaica, and has taken a place with a Welsh name on the Welsh borders for three years — what I knew he would do. He wrote me some tender words, dear fellow. . . .

May God bless you.

Yours in much love, Ba.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca:
September 14, 1857 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — A letter from me will have crossed yours and told you of all our misadventures. It has been a summer to me full of blots, vexations, anxieties; and if, in spite of everything, I am physically stronger for the fresh air and smell of green leaves, that's a proof that soul and body are two.

Our friends of the hotel went away last Saturday, and I have a letter from Isa Blagden with a good account of Lytton. He goes back to Villa Bricchieri, where they are to house together, unless Sir Edward comes down (which he may do) to catch up his son and change the plan. Isa has not quite killed herself with nursing him, a little of her being still left to express what has been.

Now, dear Fanny, I am going to try to tell you of *our* plans. No, 'plans' is not the word; our thoughts are in the purely elemental state so far. But we *think* of going to Rome (or Naples) at the far end of November, and of staying here as many days deep into October meanwhile as the cold mountain air will let us. On leaving this place we go to Florence and wait. Unless, indeed (which is possible too), we go to Egypt and the Holy Land, in which case we shall not remain where we are beyond the end of September. . . .

I never could consent to receive my theology — or any other species of guidance, in fact — from the 'spirits,' so called. I have no more confidence, apart from my own conscience and discretionary selection, in spirits out of the body than in those embodied. The submission of the whole mind and judgment carries you in either case to the pope — or to the devil. So *I* think. Don't let them bind you hand and foot. Resist. Be yourself. Also, where (as in

the medium-writing) you have the human mixture to evolve the spiritual sentiment from, the insecurity becomes doubly insecure. . . .

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

The end of the time at the Bagni di Lucca was clouded by another anxiety, caused by the illness of Penini. It was not, however, a long one, and early in October the whole party was able to return to Florence, where they remained throughout the winter and the following spring. Letters of this period are, however, scarce, and there is nothing particular to record concerning it. Since the publication of 'Aurora Leigh,' Mrs. Browning had been taking a holiday from poetical composition; and, indeed, she never resumed it on a large scale, and published no other volume save the 'Poems before Congress,' which were the fruit of a later period of special excitement. She had put her whole self into 'Aurora Leigh,' and seemed to have no further message to give to mankind. It is evident, too, that her strength was already beginning to decline and the various family and public anxieties which followed 1856 made demands on what remained of it too great to allow of much application to poetry.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Bagni di Lucca:] Monday, September 28, [1857].

You will understand too well why I have waited some days before answering your letter, dearest Fanny, though you bade me write at once, when I tell you that my own precious Penini has been ill with gastric fever and is even now confined to his bed. Eleven days ago, when he was looking like a live rose and in an exaggeration of spirits, he proposed to go with me, to run by my portantina in which I went to pay a visit some mile and a half away. The portantini men walked too fast for him, and he was tired

and heated. Then, while I paid my visit, he played by the river with a child of the house, and returned with me in the dusk. He complained of being tired during the return, and I took him up into my portantina for ten minutes. He was over-tired, however, over-heated, over-chilled, and the next day had fever and complained of his head. We did not think much of it; and the morning after he seemed so recovered that we took him with us to dine in the mountains with some American friends (the Eckleys — did you hear of them in Rome?) — twenty miles in the carriage, and ten miles on donkey-back. He was in high spirits, and came home at night singing at the top of his voice — probably to keep off the creeping sense of illness, for he has confessed since that he felt unwell even then. The next day the fever set in. The medical man doubted whether it was measles, scarlatina, or what; but soon the symptoms took the decisive aspect. He has been in bed, strictly confined to bed, since last Sunday-week night — strictly confined, except for one four hours, after which exertion he had a relapse. It is the same fever as Mr. Lytton's, only not as severe, I thank God; the attacks coming on at nights chiefly, and terrifying us, as you may suppose. The child's sweetness and goodness, too, his patience and gentleness, have been very trying. He said to me, 'You pet! don't be unhappy for *me*. Think it's a poor little boy in the street, and be just only a little sorry, and not unhappy at all.' Well, we may thank God that the bad time seems passed. He is still in bed, but it is a matter of precaution chiefly. The fever is quite in abeyance — has been for two days, and we have all to be grateful for two most tranquil nights. He amuses himself in putting maps together, and cutting out paper, and packing up his desk to *go to Florence*, which is the *idée fixe* just now. In fact when he can be moved we shall not wait here a day, for the rains have set in, and the dry elastic air of Florence will be excellent for him. The medical man (an Italian) promises us almost

that we may be able to go in a week from this time; but we won't hurry, we will run no risks. For some days he has been allowed no other sort of nourishment but ten dessert-spoonfuls of thin broth twice a day — literally nothing; not a morsel of bread, not a drop of tea, nothing. Even now the only change is, a few more spoonfuls of the same broth. It is hard, for his appetite cries out aloud; and he has agonising visions of beefsteak pies and buttered toast seen in *mirage*. Still his spirits don't fail on the whole and now that the fever is all but gone, they rise, till we have to beg him to be quiet and not to talk so much. He had the flower-girl in by his bedside yesterday, and it was quite impossible to help laughing, so many Florentine airs did he show off. 'Per Bacco, ho una fame terribile, e non voglio aver più pazienza con questo Dottore.' The doctor, however, seems skilful. . . .

But you may think how worn out I have been in body and soul, and how under these circumstances we think little of Jerusalem or of any other place but our home at Florence. Still, we shall probably pass the winter either at Rome or Naples, but I know no more than a swaddled baby which. Also we *shan't* know, probably, till the end of November, when we take out our passports. Doubt is our element. . . .

I must go to my Peni. I am almost happy about him now. And yet — oh, his lovely rosy cheeks, his round fat little shoulders, his strength and spring of a month ago! — at the best, we must lose our joy and pride in these for a time. May God bless you. I know you will feel for me, and that makes me so egotistical.

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: February 1858.]

My dearest Sarianna, — Robert is going to write to dear M. Milsand, whose goodness is 'passing that of men,' of all

common friends certainly. Robert's thanks are worth more than mine, and so I shall leave it to Robert to thank him.

The 'grippe' has gripped us here most universally, and no wonder, considering our most exceptional weather; and better the grippe than the fever which preceded it. Such cold has not been known here for years, and it has extended throughout the south, it seems, to Rome and Naples, where people are snowed and frozen up. So strange. The Arno, for the first time since '47, has had a slice or two of ice on it. Robert has suffered from the prevailing malady, which did not however, through the precautions we took, touch his throat or chest, amounting only to a bad cold in the head. Peni was afflicted in the same way but in a much slighter degree, and both are now quite well. As for me I have caught no cold — only losing my breath and my soul in the usual way, the cough not being much. So that we have no claim, any of us, on your compassion, you see . . .

I think, I think Miss Blackwell has succeeded in frightening you a little. In the case of *chaos*, she will fly to England, I suppose; and even there she may fall on a refugee plot; for I have seen a letter of Mazzini's in which it was written that people stood on ruins in England, and that at any moment there might be a crash! Certainly, confusion in Paris would be followed by confusion in Italy and everywhere on the Continent at least, so I should never think of running away, let what might happen. In '52 and '53, when we were in Paris, there was more danger than *could* arise now, under a successful plot even; for, even if the Emperor fell, the people and the army seem prepared to stand by the dynasty. Also, public order has attained to some of the force of an habitual thing.

As to the crime,[1] it has no more sympathy here than in France — be sure of that. That unscrupulous bad party is repudiated by this majority — by this people as a mass. I

[1] Orsini's attempt on the life of the Emperor Napoleon on January 14, 1858.

hear nothing but lamentations that Italians should be dishonored so by their own hands. Father Prout says that the Emperor's speech is 'the most heroic document of this century,' and in my mind the praise is merited. So indignant I feel with Mazzini and all who name his name and walk in his steps, that I couldn't find it in my heart to write (as I was going to do) to that poor bewitched Jessie on her marriage. Really, when I looked at the pen, I *couldn't move it.* . . .

Best love from

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

Florence: March 27, [1858].

This moment I take up my pen to write to you, my dearest Mrs. Martin. Did you not receive a long letter I wrote to you in Paris? No? Answer me categorically. . . .

And you are not very strong, even now? That grieves me. But here is the sun to make us all strong. For my part, my chest has not been particularly wrong this winter, nor my cough too troublesome. But the weight of the whole year heavy with various kinds of trouble, added to a trying winter, seems to have stamped out of me the vital fluid, and I am physically low, to a degree which makes me glad of renewed opportunities of getting the air; and I mean to do little but drive out for some time. It does not answer to be mastered so. For months I have done nothing but dream and read French and German romances; and the result (of learning a good deal of German) isn't the most useful thing in the world one can attain to. Then, of course, I teach Peni for an hour or so. He reads German, French, and, of course, Italian, and plays on the piano remarkably well, for which Robert deserves the chief credit. A very gentle, sweet child he is; sweet to look at and listen to; affectionate and good to live with, a real 'treasure' so far.

His passion is music; and as we are afraid of wearing his brain, we let him give most of his study-time to the piano.

So you want me, you expect me, I suppose, to approve of the miserable, undignified, unconscientious doings in England on the conspiracy question?[1] No, indeed. I would rather we had lost ten battles than stultified ourselves in the House of Commons with Brummagem brag and Derby intrigues before the eyes of Europe and America. It seems to me utterly pitiful. I hold that the most susceptible of nations should not reasonably have been irritated by the Walewski despatch, which was absolutely true in its statement of facts. Ah, dearest friend, *how* true I know better than you do; for I know of knowledge how this doctrine of assassination is held by chief refugees and communicated to their disciples in England — yes, to noble hearts, and to English hands still innocent — my very soul has bled over these things. With my own ears I have heard them justified. For nights I have been disturbed in my sleep with the thoughts of them. In the name of liberty, which I love, and of the Democracy, which I honour, I protest against them. And if such things can be put down, I hold they should be put down; and that the Conspiracy Bill is the smallest and lightest step that can be taken towards the putting down. For the rest, the great Derby intrigue, as shown in its acts, and as resulting in its State papers, nothing in history, it seems to me, was ever so small and mean.

What I think of *him?* Why, I think he is the only great man of his age, speaking of public men. I think 'Napoleon

[1] Referring to the Conspiracy Bill introduced by Lord Palmerston after the Orsini conspiracy against Napoleon in January 1858, and to the outcry against it, as an act of subservience to France, which led to Palmerston's fall. Count Walewski was the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his despatch, alluded to below, called the attention of the English Government to the shelter afforded by England to conspirators of the type of Orsini.

III devant le peuple anglais' a magnificent State paper. I confess to you it drew the tears to my eyes as I read it. So grand, so calm, so simply true!

And now with regard to Switzerland. You must remember that there is such a thing as an international law, and that only last year the Swiss appealed in virtue of it to France about the Neufchâtel refugees, and that France received and acted on that appeal. The very translation of the French despatch adds to the injustice done to it in England; because '*insister*' does not mean to 'insist upon a thing being done,' but to 'urge it upon one's attention.'

'The Times,' 'The Times.' Why, 'The Times' has intellect, but no conscience. 'The Times' is the most immoral of journals, as well as the most able. 'The Times,' on this very question of the Conspiracy Bill, has swerved, and veered, and dodged, till its readers may well be dizzy if they read every paragraph every day.

See how I fall into a fury. 'Oh, Liberty!' I would cry, like the woman who did not love liberty more than I do — 'Oh, Liberty, what deeds are done in thy name!' and (looking round Italy) what sorrows are suffered!

For I do fear that Mazzini is at the root of the evil; that man of unscrupulous theory!

Now you will be enough disgusted with me. Tell me that you and dear Mr. Martin forgive me. I never saw Orsini, but have heard and known much of him. Unfortunate man. He died better than he lived — it is all one can say. Surely you admit that the permission to read that letter on the trial was large-hearted. And it has vexed Austria to the last degree, I am happy to say. It was not allowed to be read here, by the Italian public, I mean.

Our plans are perfectly undefined, but we do hope to escape England. . . . Robert talks of Egypt for the winter. I don't know what may happen; and in the meantime would rather not be pulled and pulled by kind people in England, who want me or fancy they do. You know

everybody is as free as I am now, and freer; and if they do want me, and it isn't fancy — never mind! We may see you perhaps, in Paris, after all, this summer. . . .

Now let me tell you. Home, my *protégé* prophet, is in Italy. Think of that. He was in Pisa and in Florence for a day, saw friends of his and acquaintances of ours with whom he stayed four months on the last occasion, and who implicitly believe in him. An English woman, who from infidel opinions was converted by his instrumentality to a belief in the life after death, has died in Paris, and left him an annuity of £240, English. On coming here, he paid all his wandering debts, I am glad to hear, and is even said to have returned certain *gifts* which had been rendered unacceptable to him from the bad opinion of the givers. I hear, too, that his manners, as well as morals, are wonderfully improved. He is gone to Rome, and will return here to pay a visit to his friends in Florence after a time. The object of his coming was health. While he passed through Tuscany, the *power* seemed to be leaving him, but he has recovered it tenfold, says my informant, so I hope we shall hear of more wonders. Did you read the article in the 'Westminster'? The subject *se prête au ridicule*, but ridicule is not disproof. The Empress Eugénie protects his little sister, and has her educated in Paris.

Surely I have made up for silence. Dearest friends, both of you, may God bless you.

Your affectionate

Ba.

Robert's love and Peni's.

In the summer of 1858 an expedition was made to France, in order to visit Mr. Browning's father and sister; but no attempt was made to extend the journey into England. In fact, the circle of their flights from Florence was becoming smaller; and as 1856 saw Mrs. Browning's last visit to England, so 1858 saw her last visit to France,

or indeed, beyond the borders of Italy at all. It was only a short visit, too, — not longer than the usual expeditions into the mountains to escape the summer heat of Florence. In the beginning of July they reached Paris, where they stayed at the Hôtel Hyacinthe, rue St. Honoré, for about a fortnight, before going on to Havre in company with old Mr. Browning and Miss Browning. There they remained until September, when they returned to Paris for about a month, and thence, early in October, set out for Italy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Hôtel Hyacinthe, St. Honoré:
Wednesday and Thursday, July 8, 1858 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — The scene changes. No more cypresses, no more fireflies, no more dreaming repose on burning hot evenings. Push out the churches, push in the boulevards. Here I am, sitting alone at this moment, in an hotel near the Tuileries, where we have taken an apartment for a week, a pretty salon, with the complement of velvet sofas, and arm-chairs, and looking-glasses, and bedrooms to correspond, with clocks at distances of three yards, as if the time was in desperate danger of forgetting itself — which it is, of course. Paris looks more splendid than ever, and we were not too much out of breath with fatigue, on our arrival last night, to admit of various cries of admiration from all of us. It is a wonderfully beautiful city; and wonderfully cold considering the climate we came from. Think of our finding ourselves forced into winter suits, and looking wistfully at the grate. I did so this morning. But now there is sunshine.

We had a prosperous journey, except the sea voyage which prostrated all of us — *Annunziata*, to 'the lowest deep' of misery. At Marseilles we slept, and again at Lyons and Dijon, taking express trains the whole way, so that there was as little fatigue as possible; and what with the reviving

change of air and these precautions, I felt less tired throughout the journey than I have sometimes felt at Florence after a long drive and much talking. We had scarcely any companions in the carriages, and were able to stretch to the full longitude of us — a comfort always; and I had 'Madame Ancelot,' and 'Doit et Avoir,' which dropped into my bag from Isa's kind fingers on the last evening, and we gathered 'Galignanis' and 'Illustrations' day by day. Travelling has really become a luxury. I feel the *repose* of it chiefly. Yes, no possibility of unpleasant visitors! no fear of horrible letters! quite lifted above the plane of bad news, or of the expectation of bad news, which is nearly the same thing. There you are, shut in, in a carriage! Quite out of reach of the telegraph even, which you mock at as you run alongside the wires.

Yes, but some visitors, some faces, and voices are missed. And altogether I was very sad at leaving my Italy, oh, very sad! . . .

Tell me how you like 'up in the villa' life, and how long you shall bear it.

Paris! I have not been out of the house, except when I came into it. But to-day, Thursday, I mean to drive out a little with Robert. You know I have a *weakness* for Paris, and a *passion* for Italy; which would operate thus, perhaps, that I could easily stay here when once here, if there was but a sun to stay with me. We are in admiration, all of us, at everything, from cutlets to costumes. On the latter point I shall give myself great airs over you barbarians presently — no offence to Zerlinda — and, to begin, pray draw your bonnets more over your faces.

I would rather send this bit than wait, as I did not write to you from Marseilles.

May God bless you. If you knew how happy I think you for being in Italy — if you knew.

I shiver with the cold. I tie up three loves to send you from Your truly affectionate

Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

Hôtel Hyacinthe, St. Honoré, Paris:
Thursday [July 8, 1858].

My dearest dear Isa, — We are here, having lost nothing — neither a carpet bag nor a bit of our true love for you. We arrived the evening before last, and this letter should have been written yesterday if I hadn't been interrupted. Such a pleasant journey we had, after the curse of the sea! ('*Where there shall be no more sea*' beautifies the thought of heaven to me. But Frederick Tennyson's prophets shall compound for as many railroads as they please.)

In fact, we did admirably by land. We were of unbridled extravagance, and slept both at Lyons and Dijon, and travelled by express trains besides, so that we were almost alone the whole way. and able to lie at full length and talk and read, and 'Doit et Avoir' did duty by me, I assure you — to say nothing of 'Galignanis' and French newspapers. I was nearly sorry to arrive, and Robert suggested the facility of 'travelling on for ever so.' He (by help of *nux*) was in a heavenly state of mind, and never was the French people — public manners, private customs, general bearing, hostelry, and cooking, more perfectly appreciated than by him and all of us. Judge of the courtesy and liberality. *One* box had its lid opened, and when Robert disclaimed smuggling, 'Je vous crois, monsieur' dismissed the others. Then the passport was never looked at after a glance at Marseilles. I am thinking of writing to the 'Times,' or should be if I could keep my temper.

So you see, dear Isa, I am really very well for me to be so pert. Yes, indeed, I am very well. The journey did not overtire me, and change of air had its usual reviving effect. Also, Robert keeps boasting of his influx of energies, and his appetite is renewed. We have resolved nothing about our sea plans, but have long lists of places,

and find it difficult to choose among so many enchanting paradises, with drawbacks of 'dearness,' &c. &c. Meanwhile we are settled comfortably in an hotel close to the Tuileries, in a pretty salon and pleasant bedrooms, for which we don't pay exorbitantly, taken for a week, and we shall probably outstay the week. Robert has the deep comfort of finding his father, on whose birthday we arrived, looking ten years younger — really, I may say so — and radiant with joy at seeing him and Peni. Dear Mr. Browning and Sarianna will go with us wherever we go, of course.

Paris looks more beautiful than ever, and we were not too dead to see this as we drove through the streets on Wednesday evening. The development of architectural splendour everywhere is really a sight worth coming to see, even from Italy. Observe, I always feel the charm. And yet I yearn back to my Florence — the dearer the farther.

We slept at Dijon, where Robert, in a passion of friendship, went out twice to stand before Maison Milsand (one of the shows of the town), and muse and bless the threshold. Little did he dream that Milsand was there at that moment, having been called suddenly from Paris by the dangerous illness of his mother. So we miss our friend; but we shall not, I think, altogether, for he talked of following us to the sea, Sarianna says, and even if he is restrained from doing this, we shall pass some little time in Paris on our return, and so see him. . . .

Mrs. Jameson is here, but goes on Saturday to England.

[*Incomplete.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

2 Rue de Perry, Le Havre, Maison Versigny:
July 23, 1858 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — . . . I gave you an account of our journey to Paris, which I won't write over again, especially as you may have read some things like it. In Paris we remained a fortnight except a day, and I liked it as I always like Paris, for which I have a decided fancy. And yet I did nothing, except in one shop, and in a fiacre driving round and round, and sometimes at a restaurant, dining round and round. But Paris is so full of life — murmurs so of the fountain of intellectual youth for ever and ever — that rolling up the rue de Rivoli (much more the Boulevards) suggests a quicker beat of the fancy's heart; and I like it — I like it. The architectural beauty is wonderful. Give me Venice on water, Paris on land — each in its way is a dream city. If one had but the sun there — such a sun as one has in Italy! Or if one had no lungs here — such lungs as are in me. But no. Under actual circumstances something different from Paris must satisfy me. Also, when all's said and sighed, I love Italy — I love my Florence. I love that 'hole of a place,' as Father Prout called it lately — with all its dust, its cobwebs, its spiders even, I love it, and with somewhat of the kind of blind, stupid, respectable, obstinate love which people feel when they talk of 'beloved native lands.' I feel this for Italy, by mistake for England. Florence is my chimney-corner, where I can sulk and be happy. But you haven't come to that yet. In spite of which, you will like the Baths of Lucca, just as you like Florence, for certain advantages — for the exquisite beauty, and the sense of abstraction from the vulgarities and vexations of the age, which is the secret of the strange charm of the south,

perhaps — who knows? And yet there are vulgarities and vexations even in Tuscany, if one digs for them — or doesn't dig, sometimes. . . .

In Paris we saw Father Prout, who was in great force and kindness, and Charles Sumner, passing through the burning torture under the hands of French surgeons, which is approved of by the brains of English surgeons. Do you remember the Jesuit's agony, in the 'Juif Errant'? Precisely that. Exposed to the living coal for seven minutes, and the burns taking six weeks to heal. Mr. Sumner refused chloroform — from some foolish heroic principle, I imagine, and suffered intensely. Of course he is not able to stir for some time after the operation, and can't read or sleep from the pain. Now, he is just 'healed,' and is allowed to travel for two months, after which he is to return and be burned again. Isn't it a true martyrdom? I ask. What is apprehended is paralysis, or at best nervous infirmity for life, from the effect of the blows (on the spine) of that savage.

Then, just as we arrived in Paris, dear Lady Elgin had another 'stroke,' and was all but gone. She rallied, however, with her wonderful vitality, and we left her sitting in her garden, fixed to the chair, of course, and not able to speak a word, nor even to gesticulate distinctly, but with the eloquent soul full and radiant, alive to both worlds. Robert and I sate there, talking politics and on other subjects, and there she sate and let no word drop unanswered by her bright eyes and smile. It was a beautiful sight. Robert fed her with a spoon from her soup-plate, and she signed, as well as she could, that he should kiss her forehead before he went away. She was always so fond of Robert, as women are apt to be, you know — even *I*, a little. . . .

Forster wrote the other day, melancholy with the misfortunes of his friends, though he doesn't name Dickens. Landor had just fled to his (Forster's) house in London for protection from *an action for libel.*

See what a letter I have written. Write to me, dearest Fanny, and love me. Oh, how glad I shall be to be back among you again in my Florence!

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

To Mrs. Jameson

Maison Versigny, 2 rue de Perry, Le Havre:
July 24, 1858 [postmark].

Dearest Mona Nina, — Have you rather wondered at not hearing? We have been a-wandering, a-wandering over the world — have been to Étretat and failed, and now are ignominiously settled at Havre — yes, at Havre, the name of which we should have scorned a week ago as a mere roaring commercial city. But after all, as sometimes I say with originality, 'civilisation is a good thing.' The country about Étretat is very pretty, and the coast picturesque with fantastic rocks, but the accommodation dear in proportion to its badness; which I do believe is the case everywhere with places, now and then even with persons — dear in proportion to their badness. We could get three bedrooms, a salon, and kitchen, one opening into another and no other access, and the kitchen presenting the first door, all furnished exactly alike, except that where the bedroom had a bed the kitchen had a stove; wooden chairs *en suite*, not an inch of carpet, and just an inch of looking-glass in the best bedroom. View, a potato-patch, and price two hundred francs a month. Robert took it in a 'fine phrenzy,' on which I rebelled, and made him give it up on a sacrifice of ten francs, which was the only cheap thing in the place, as far as I observed anything. Also, the bay is so restricted that whoever takes a step is 'commanded' by all the windows of the primitive hotel and the few villas, and as people have nothing whatever to do but to look at you, you may imagine the perfection of the analysis. I should have been a fly in a microscope, feeling my legs and arms counted

on all sides, and receiving no comfort from the scientific results. So, you see, we 'gave it up' and came here in a sort of despair, meaning to take the railroad to Dieppe; when lo! our examining forces find that the place here is very tenable, and we take a house close to the sea (though the view is interrupted) in a green garden, and quite away from a suggestion of streets and commerce. The bathing is good, we have a post-office and reading-rooms at our elbow, and nothing distracting of any kind. The house is large and airy, and our two families are lodged in separate apartments, though we meet at dinner in our dining-room. Certainly the country immediately around Havre is not pretty, but we came for the sea after all, and the sea is open and satisfactory. Robert has found a hole I can creep through to the very shore, without walking many yards, and there I can sit on a bench and get strength, if so it pleases God.

Have I not sent you a full account of us? Now if you would return me a cent. per cent. — *soll und haben*. I want so much to know all about you — how you feel, dearest friend, and how you are. Do write and tell me of yourself. May God bless you ever and ever.

Your affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Madame Braun

2 Rue de Perry, Le Havre, Maison Versigny:
August 10 [1858].

My dearest Madame Braun, — If you have not heard from me before, it has not been that I have not thought of you anxiously and tenderly, but I had the idea that so many must be thinking of you, and saying to you with sad faces 'they were sorry,' that I kept away, not to be the one too many. It seems so vain when we sympathise with a suffering friend. And yet it is *something* — oh yes, I have felt that! But you *knew* I must feel for you, if I teased you

with words or not; and I, for my part, hearing of you from others, felt shy, as I say, till I heard you were better, of writing to you myself. And you *are* feeling better, Mrs. Jameson tells me, and are somewhat more cheerful about your state. I thank God for this good news. . . .

One of the few reasons for which I regret our absence from England this summer is that I miss seeing you with my own eyes, and I should like much to see you and talk to you of things of interest to both of us. If illness suppresses in us a few sources of pleasure, it leaves the real *ich* open to influences and keen-sighted to *facts* which are as surely *natural* as the fly's wing, though we are apt to consider them vaguely as 'supernatural.'

'More and more life is what we want' Tennyson wrote long ago, and that is the right want. Indifference to life is disease, and therefore not strength. But the life here is only half the apple — a cut out of the apple, I should say, merely meant to suggest the perfect round of fruit — and there is in the world now, I can testify to you, *scientific proof* that what we call death is a mere change of circumstances, a change of dress, a mere breaking of the outside shell and husk. This subject is so much the most interesting to me of all, that I can't help writing of it to you. Among all the ways of progress along which the minds of men are moving, this draws me most. There is much folly and fanaticism, unfortunately, because foolish men and women do not cease to be foolish when they hit upon a truth. There was a man who hung bracelets upon plane trees. But it was a tree — it is a truth — notwithstanding; yes, and so much a truth that in twenty years the probability is you will have no more doubters of the immortality of souls, and no more need of Platos to prove it.

We have come here to dip *me* in warm sea-water, in order to an improvement in strength, for I have been very weak and unwell of late, as perhaps Mrs. Jameson has told you. But the sea and the change have brought me up

again, as I hope they may yourself, and now I am looking forward to getting back to Italy for the winter, and perhaps to Rome.

Did you know Lady Elgin in Paris? She has been hopelessly, in the opinion of her physicians, affected by paralysis, but is now better, her daughter writes to me. A most remarkable person Lady Elgin is. We left her sitting in her garden, not able to speak — to articulate one word — but with one of the most radiant happy faces I ever saw in man or woman. I think I remember that you knew her. Her salon was one of the most agreeable in Paris, and she herself, with her mixture of learning and simplicity, one of the most interesting persons in it. . . .

Dearest Madame Braun, I won't think of the possibility even of your writing to me, so little do I expect to hear. Indeed, I would not write if I considered it would entail writing upon *you*. Only believe that I tenderly regard and think of you, and always shall. May God bless you, my dear friend. Your attached

Elizabeth B. Browning.

The following letter was written at Paris during the stay there which intervened between leaving Havre and the return to Florence:

To Miss I. Blagden

6 Rue de Castiglione, Place Vendôme, Paris: October 2 [1858].

My dearest Isa, — I am saddened, saddened by your letter. We both are. Indeed, this last news from India must have struck — I know it did. Still, to your generous nature, long regret for your dear Louisa will be impossible; and you, so given to forget yourself, will come to forget a grief which is only your own. For she was in the world as not of it, in a painful sense; she was cut off from the cheerful, natural development of ordinary human beings;

and if, as was probable, the conviction of this dreary fact had fastened on her mind, the result would have been perhaps demoralising, certainly depressing, more and more. Rather praise God for her therefore, dearest Isa, that she is gone above the cloud, gone where she can exercise active virtues and charities, instead of being the mild patient object of the charities and virtues of her friends. Perhaps she ministers to *you* now instead of being ministered to by you, while the remembrance of her life on earth is tenderly united to you ever, a proof before men and angels that *your* life (whatever you may please to say of yourself) has not been useless, nor barren of good and tender deeds. . . .

In this letter and the last (such depressed letters!) you compare your own fate with that of some others with an injustice which God measures, and which I too have knowledge of. Isa, you speak you know not what. Be sure of one thing, however, that God has not been niggardly towards you, and that He never made a creature for which He did not make the work suited to its hand. He never made a creature necessarily useless, nor gave a life which it was not sin on the creature's part to hold unthankfully and throw back as a poor gift. Your excellent understanding will work clear your spirits presently. Some of those whom you think enviable, if they showed you their secret griefs, unsuspected by you, would leave tears in your eyes for *them*, not *you*. Every heart knows its own bitterness, and God knows when the bitterest drop is necessary for the heart's health. May He bless you, love you, teach you, strengthen you, make you serene and bright in Him, dear, dear Isa. I have spoken as to a sister; I have spoken as to my own soul in an hour of faintness. Let us take courage, Isa.

Dear, I had just folded up your parcel for Miss Alexander that my brother George should take it to-morrow. It has been my first opportunity for England—at least, for London. But now I will carry it back to you. . . .

Arabel stays with me till we go, which will be in a fortnight perhaps from now. We have an apartment in an exquisite situation, two paces from the Tuileries Gardens, first floor, three best bedrooms and two servants' rooms, a closet of a dining-room, a salon — all small, but exquisitely comfortable and Parisian, looking into a court though, and we are not tempted to stay the winter. No; we return to Florence faithfully. Write again, and be happy, Isa; it is as if I said *be good*. Tell me, can it be true that Lytton is in Florence with his mother, as Father Prout assures us on the authority of Lady Walpole? . . .

Write to your ever, in word and deed, loving

Ba.

In October the travellers were back in Florence, but this time only for a short stay of some six weeks, since it was decided that Rome would be more suitable to Mrs. Browning's failing health during the winter. On November 24 they reached Rome, and for the next six months were quartered, as in the winter of 1853–4, at No. 43 Via Bocca di Leone. Here it was that they heard the first mutterings of the storm which was to burst during the following year and to result in the making of Italy.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Guidi: Saturday [about October 1858].

You do not come, dearest Fanny, though I am here waiting, and I begin to be uneasy about you. Do at least write, do. We have been here since Tuesday, and here is Saturday, and every morning there has been an anxious looking forward for you. . . .

Miss —— wrote to me in Paris to propose travelling with us, which Robert lacked chivalry to accede to; and, in fact, our ways of journeying are too uncertain to admit of arrangements with anyone beyond our circle. For instance,

we took nine days to get here from Paris, spending only one day at Chambéry, for the sake of Les Charmettes and Rousseau. Robert played the 'Dream' on the old harpsichord, the keys of which rattled in a ghastly way, as if it were the bones of him who once so 'dreamed.' Then there was the old watch hung up, without a tick in it. At St. Jean de Maurienne we got into difficulties with diligences, and submitted to being thrown out for the night at Fanclebourg, I more dead than alive, and indeed I suffered much in passing the mountain next morning. Then again, on the sea, we had a *burrasca,* and the captain had half a mind when half-way to Leghorn to turn back to Genoa. Passengers much frightened, including me, a little. A wretched Neapolitan boat, with a machine 'inclined to go to the devil every time the wind went anywhere,' as I heard a French gentleman on board say afterwards. Altogether we were so done up after eighteen hours of it, that we stayed at Leghorn instead of going on straight to Florence. Still, now I seem to have got over fatigue and the rest — and we keep our faces turned undeviatingly to Rome. Mdme. du Quaire having carefully apprised M. Mignaty that we left Paris on the thirteenth, our friends here seem to have made up their minds that we had perished by land or water, and Annunziata's poor sister had passed three days in tears, for instance.

Now, dearest Fanny, let me confess to you. I have not brought the bonnet. A bonnet is a personal matter, and I would not let anyone choose one for *me.* Still, as you had more faith in man (or woman), I would have risked even displeasing you, only Robert would not let me. He said it was absurd — I 'did not know your size;' I 'could not know your taste;' in fact, he would not let me. Perhaps after all it is better. You shall see mine, which is the last novelty, and I will tell you the results of having investigated the bonnet question generally. I was told at a fashionable shop that hats might be worn out of one's teens; but in

Paris let me hasten to add, you don't see hats walking about except on the heads of small girls. In Rome it may be otherwise, as at the seaside it was. Bonnets are a great deal larger, but you shall see.

Oh, so glad I am to be back — so glad, so glad!

And so happy I shall be to see you, dearest Fanny, whom, till now, I have not thanked for the pretty, pretty sketch. I recognised the persons at a glance, you threw into them so much character. . . .

Your ever most affectionate

E. B. B.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about November 1858.]

Robert's uncertainty about Rome, my dearest Sarianna, has led him into delay of writing. We dropped here upon summer, and a few days afterwards, just as suddenly, the winter dropped upon *us*. Such wonderful weather, such cold, such snow — enough to strangle one. The rain has come, however, to-day, and though everything feels wretched enough, and I am languid about schemes of travelling, we talk of going next week, should nothing hinder.

> 'If it be possible
> After much grief and pain.'

Peni would rather stay, I believe. His Florence is in his heart still.

Robert will have told you about his bust,[1] which is exquisite in the clay, and will be exhibited in London in the marble next May. The likeness, the poetry, the ideal grace and infantile reality are all there. I am so happy to have it. I set about teasing Robert till he gave it to me, and, as he really loses nothing thereby, I accepted at once, as you

[1] A bust of the child, by Monroe.

may suppose. I would rather have given up Rome and had the bust; but the artist was generous, and would only accept what would cover the expenses, twenty-five guineas. He said he 'would not otherwise do it for us, as he asked in the first place to be allowed to make the sketch in clay, and would not appear to have laid a trap for an order.' So we are all three very happy and grateful to one another — which is pleasant. I feel the most obliged perhaps of the three — obliged to the other two — and ought to be, after the napoleons dropt in Paris, Sarianna!

Oh no; the sea was necessary from Genoa. The expense of the journey would have been very much increased if we had taken the whole way by land, and it was a great thing to escape that rough Gulf of Lyons. The journey to Rome will be rendered easy to Robert's pocket by the extraordinary chance of Mr. Eckley's empty carriage, otherwise the repeated pulls might have pulled us down too low.

Peni will write to you. He loves his nonno and you very much — tell nonno; and my love goes with my message.

May God bless both of you. Love to M. Milsand.

Your affectionate

Ba.

Robert Browning to Miss Browning

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone:
Friday, November 26, 1858 [postmark].

Dearest Sis, — You received a letter written last thing on Wednesday, 18th. We started next day with perfectly fine mild weather and every sort of comfort, and got to our first night's stage, Poggio Bagnoli, with great ease; with the same advantages next day, we passed Arezzo and reached Camuscia, and on Saturday slept at Perugia, having found the journey delightful. Sunday was rainy, but just as mild, so Ba did not suffer at all; we slept at Spoleto. Rain again on Monday. We reached Terni early in the

day in order to go to the Falls, but the thing was impossible for Ba. Eckley, his mother-in-law, and I went, however, getting drenched, but they were fine, the rain and melted snow having increased the waters extraordinarily. On Tuesday we had fine weather again to Civita Castellana; there we found that on the previous day, while we were staying at Terni, a carriage was stopped and robbed in the road we otherwise should have pursued. They said such a thing had not happened for years. On Wednesday afternoon, four o'clock, we reached Rome, with beautiful weather; so it had been for some four out of our seven days. Ba bore the journey irregularly well; of course she has thus had a week of open air, beside the change, which always benefits her. We always had the windows of the carriage open. We passed Wednesday night at an hotel in order to profit by any information friends might be able to furnish, but we ended by returning to the rooms here we occupied before, of which we knew the virtues — a blaze of sun on the front rooms — and absolute healthiness. Rents are enormous; we pay only ten dollars a month more than before, in consideration of the desire the old landlady had to get us again. To anybody else the price would have been 20 more — 60 in all — for which we are to pay 40. The Eckleys took *good rooms* and pay 1,000 (£210 or 15) for six months! One can't do *that*. The best is that they have thoroughly cleaned and painted the place, and everything is very satisfactorily arranged. We take the apartment for four months, meaning to be at liberty to go to Naples if we like. We have no fire this morning while I write, but it is before breakfast and Ba may like the sight of one, tho' I rather think she will not. Rome looks very well, and I hope we shall have a happier time of it than before. Many friends are here and everybody is very kind. The Eckleys were extravagantly good to us, something beyond conception almost. We have seen Miss Cushman, Hatty,[1] Leighton,

[1] Miss Hosmer.

Cartwright, the Storys, Page and his new (third) wife, Gibson, beside the Brackens and Mrs. Mackenzie; and there are others I shall see to-day. Ferdinando was sent on by sea with the luggage, and met us at the gate. It has been an expensive business altogether, but I think we shall not regret it. I daresay you have mild weather at Paris also. These premature beginnings of cold break down and leave the rest of the year the warmer, if not the better for them. Dearest Sis, write and tell me all the news of your two selves. Do you hear anything about Reuben's leaving London? Anything of Lady Elgin? How is Madame Milsand? I will send you the last 'Ath.' I have received, but break off here rather abruptly, in order to let Ba write. Good-bye. God bless you both. Kindest love to Milsand.

Yours ever affectionately

R. B.

E. B. Browning to Miss Browning

My dearest Sarianna, — I don't know whether this letter from Rome will surprise you, but we have done it at last. Our journey was most prosperous, the wonderful inrush of winter which buried all Italy in snow, and for some days rendered the possibility of any change of quarters so more than doubtful (I myself gave it up for days) having given way to an inrush of summer as wonderful. The change was so pleasant that I bore with perfect equanimity the lamentations of certain English acquaintances of ours in Florence, who declared it was the most frightful and dangerous climate that could be, that now one was frozen to death and the next day burnt and melted, and that people couldn't be healthy under such transitions. But all countries of the south are subject to the same of course wherever there is a southern sun, and mountains to retain snow. Even in Paris you complain of something a little like it, because of the sun. We left Florence in a blaze of

sunshine accordingly, and there and everywhere found the country transfigured back into summer, except for two days of April rain. Of the kindness of our dear friends Mr. and Mrs. Eckley I am moved when I try to speak. They humiliate me by their devotion. Such generosity and delicacy, combined with so much passionate sentiment (there is no other word), are difficult to represent. The Americans are great in some respects, not that Americans generally are like these, but that these could scarcely be English — for instance, that mixture of enthusiasm and simplicity we have not. Our journey was delightful and not without some incidents, which might have been accidents. We were as nearly as possible thrown once into a ditch and once down a mountain precipice, the spirited horses plunging on one side, but at last Mr. Eckley lent us his courier, who sate on the box by the coachman and helped him to manage better. Then there was a fight between our oxen-drivers, one of them attempting to stab the other with a knife, and Robert rushing in between till Peni and I were nearly frantic with fright. No harm happened, however, except that Robert had his trousers torn. And we escaped afterwards certain banditti, who stopped a carriage only the day before on the very road we travelled, and robbed it of sixty-two scudi.

Here at Rome we are still fortunate, for with enormous prices rankling around us we get into our old quarters at eleven pounds a month. The rooms are smaller than our ambition would fain climb to (one climbs, also, a little too high on the stairs), but on the whole the quiet healthfulness and sunshine are excellent things, particularly in Rome, and we are perfectly contented. . . .

Rome is so full that I am proceeding to lock up my doors throughout the day. I can't live without some use of life. Here must come the break. May God bless you both. Pen's love with mine to the dear nonno and yourself.

Ba.

To Mr. Ruskin

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone: January 1, 1859.

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — There is an impulse upon me to write to you, and as it ought to have come long ago, I yield to it, and am glad that it comes on this first day of a new year to inaugurate the time. It may be a good omen for *me*. Who knows?

We received your letter at Florence and very much did it touch me — us, I should say — and then I would have written if you hadn't bade us wait for another letter, which has not come to this day. Shall I say one thing? The sadness of that letter struck me like the languor after victory, for you who have fought many good fights and never for a moment seemed to despond before, write this word and this. After treading the world down in various senses, you are tired. It is natural perhaps, but this evil will pass like other evils, and I wish you from my heart a good clear noble year, with plenty of work, and God consciously over all to give you satisfaction. What would this life be, dear Mr. Ruskin, if it had not eternal relations? For my part, if I did not believe so, I should lay my head down and die. Nothing would be worth doing, certainly. But I am what many people call a 'mystic,' and what I myself call a 'realist,' because I consider that every step of the foot or stroke of the pen here has some real connection with and result in the hereafter.

'This life's a dream, a fleeting show!' no indeed. That isn't my '*doxy*.' I don't think that nothing is worth doing, but that everything is worth doing — everything good, of course — and that everything which does good for a moment does good for ever, in *art* as well as in morals. Not that I look for arbitrary punishment or reward (the last least, certainly. I would no more impute merit to the human than your Spurgeon would), but that I believe in a perpetual

sequence, according to God's will, and in what has been called a 'correspondence' between the natural world and the spiritual.

Here I stop myself with a strong rein. It is fatal, dear Mr. Ruskin, to write letters on New Year's day. One can't help moralising; one falls on the metaphysical vein unaware.

Forgive me.

We are in Rome you see. We have been very happy and found rooms swimming all day in sunshine, when there is any sun, and yet not ruinously dear. I was able to go out on Christmas morning (a wonderful event for me) and hear the silver trumpets in St. Peter's. Well, it was very fine. I never once thought of the Scarlet Lady, nor of the Mortara case, nor anything to spoil the pleasure. Yes, and I enjoyed it both æsthetically and devotionally, putting my own words to the music. Was it wise, or wrong?

But we have had and are having some cold, some tramontana, and I have kept house ever since. Only in Rome there's always hope of a good warm scirocco. We talk of seeing Naples before we turn home to our Florence, to keep feast for Dante.

It is delightful to hear of all you are *permitted* to do for England meanwhile in matters of art, and one of these days we shall go north to take a few happy hours of personal advantage out of it all. Not this year, however, I think. We have done duty to the north too lately. Now it seems to me we have the right (of virtue, in spite of what I said on another page, or rather, *because* I said it in good human inconsistency), the right to have and hold our Italy in undisturbed possession. I never feel at home anywhere else, or to *live* rightly anywhere else at all. It's a horrible want of patriotism, of course, only, if I were upon trial, I might say in a low voice a few things to soften the judgment against me on account of that sin. Ah! we missed you at Havre! If you had come it would have been something

pleasant to remember that detestable place by, besides the salt-water which profited one's health a little. We were in Paris too some six weeks in all (besides eight weeks at Havre !) and Paris has a certain charm for me always. If we had seen you in Paris ! But no, you must have floated past us, close, close, yet we missed you.

A good happy new year we wish to Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin, as to yourself, and, dear Mr. Ruskin, to your mother I shall say that my child is developing in a way to make me very contented and thankful. Yes, I thank God for him more and more, and *she* can understand that, I know. His musical faculty is a decided thing, and he plays on the piano quite remarkably for his age (through his father's instruction) while I am writing this. He is reading aloud to me an Italian translation of 'Monte Cristo,' and with a dramatic intelligence which would strike you, as it does perhaps, that I should select such a book for a child of nine years old to read at all. It's rather young to be acclimated to French novels, is it not? But the difficulty of getting Italian books is great, and there's a good deal in the early part of 'Monte Cristo,' the prison part, very attractive. His voice was full of sobs when poor Dantes was consigned to the Château d'If. 'Do you mean to say, mama, that *that boy* is to stay there all his life?' He made me tell him 'to make him happy,' as he said.

For the rest he reads French and German, and we shall have to begin Latin in another year I suppose. Do you advise that, you, Mr. Ruskin? He has not given up the drawing neither. Ah ! but there is a weight beyond the post, whatever your goodness may bear, and I must leave a little space for Robert.

May God bless you, my dear friend. Dare I say it? it *came*.

Affectionately yours always,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Robert Browning to Mr. Ruskin

I am to say something, dear Ruskin; it shall be only the best of wishes for this and all other years; go on again like the noble and dear man you are to us all, and especially to us two out of them all. Whenever I chance on an extract, a report, it lights up the dull newspaper stuff wrapt round it and makes me glad at heart and clearer in head. We, for our part, have just sent off a corrected 'Aurora Leigh,' which is the better for a deal of pains, we hope, and my wife deserves. There will be a portrait from a photograph done at Havre without retouching — good, I think. Truest love to you and yours — your father and mother. Do help us by a word every now and then.

Affectionately yours,

R. B.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: January 7 [1859].

My dearest Isa, — Your letter seemed long in coming, as this will seem to you, I fear. I ought to have answered mine at once, and put off doing so from reason to reason, and from day to day. Very busy I have been, sending off seven of the nine books of 'Aurora,'[1] having dizzied myself with the 'ifs' and 'ands,' and done some little good I hope at much cost. . . .

As to the Roman climate, we have had some beautiful weather, but Robert was calling his gods to witness (the goddess Tussis among them) that he never felt it so cold in Florence — never. Fountains frozen, Isa, and the tramontana tremendous. But it can't last — that's the comfort at Rome; and meantime we are housed exquisitely in our lion's mouth; the new *portiere* and universal carpeting keeping it snugger than ever, and the sun over-streaming us through

[1] The fourth edition, in which several alterations were made.

six windows. I have just been saying that whenever I come to Rome I shall choose to come here. The only fault is, the height and the smallness of the rooms; and in spite of the last, we have managed to have and hold twenty people and upwards through a *serata*. Peni has had a bad cold, from over-staying the time on the Pincio one afternoon, and I have kept him in the house these ten days. Such things one may do by one's lion-cubs; but the lions are harder to deal with, and Robert caught cold two or three days ago; in spite of which he chose to get up at six every morning as usual and go out to walk with Mr. Eckley. Only by miracle and nux is he much better to-day. I thought he was going to have a furious grippe, as last year and the year before. I must admit, however, that he is extremely well just now, to speak generally, and that this habit of regular exercise (with occasional homœopathy) has thrown him into a striking course of prosperity, as to looks, spirits, and appetite. He eats 'vulpinely' he says — which means that a lark or two is no longer enough for dinner. At breakfast the loaf perishes by Gargantuan slices. He is plunged into gaieties of all sorts, caught from one hand to another like a ball, has gone out every night for a fortnight together, and sometimes two or three times deep in a one night's engagements. So plenty of distraction, and no Men and Women. Men and women from without instead! I am shut up in the house of course, and go to bed when he goes out — and the worst is, that there's a difficulty in getting books. Still, I get what I can, and stop up the chinks with Swedenborg; and in health am very well, for me, and in tranquillity excellently well. Not that there are not people more than enough who come to see me, but that there is nothing vexatious just now; life goes smoothly, I thank God, and I like Rome better than I did last time. The season is healthy too (for Rome). I have only heard of one English artist since we came, who arrived, sickened, died, and was buried, before anyone knew who he was. Besides

ordinary cases of slight Roman fever among the English, Miss Sherwood (who with her father was at Florence) has had it slightly, and Mrs. Marshall who came to us from Tennyson. (A Miss Spring-Rice she was.) But the poor Hawthornes suffer seriously. Una is dissolved to a shadow of herself by reiterated attacks, and now Miss Shepherd is seized with gastric fever. Mr. Hawthorne is longing to get away — where, he knows not.

My Peni has conquered his cold, and when the weather gets milder I shall let him out. Meanwhile he has taken to — what do you suppose? I go into his room at night and find him with a candle regularly settled on the table by him, and he reading, deeply rapt, an Italian translation of 'Monte Cristo.' Pretty well for a lion-cub, isn't it? He is enchanted with this book, lent to him by our padrona; and exclaims every now and then, 'Oh, magnificent, magnificent!' And this morning, at breakfast, he gravely delivered himself to the following effect: 'Dear mama, for the future I mean to read *novels*. I shall read all Dumas's, to begin. And then I shall like to read papa's favourite book, "Madame Bovary."' Heavens, what a lion-cub! Robert and I could only answer by a burst of laughter. It was so funny. That little dot of nine and a half full of such hereditary tendencies.

And 'Madame Bovary' in a course of education! . . .

May God bless you, my-much-loved Isa, for this and other years beyond also. I shall love you all that way — says the genius of the ring.

Your ever loving

BA.

CHAPTER X

1859–1860

At this point in Mrs. Browning's correspondence we reach the first allusion to the political crisis which had now become acute, and of which the letters that follow are full, almost to excess. On January 1 Napoleon had astounded Europe by his language to the Austrian ambassador at Paris, in which he spoke of the bad relations unfortunately subsisting between their States. On the 10th Victor Emmanuel declared that he must listen to the cry of pain which came up to him from all Italy. After this it was clear that there was nothing to do but to prepare for war. It was in vain that England pressed for a European Congress, with the view of arranging a general disarmament. Sardinia professed willingness to accept it, but Austria declined, and on April 23 sent an ultimatum to Victor Emmanuel, demanding unconditional disarmament, which was naturally refused. On the 29th Austria declared war, and her troops crossed the Ticino — an act which Napoleon had already announced would be considered as tantamount to a declaration of war with France.

With regard to the tone of Mrs. Browning's letters during this period of politics and war, there are a few considerations to be borne in mind. Her two deepest political convictions were here united in one — her faith in the honesty of Louis Napoleon, and her enthusiasm for Italian freedom and unity. There were many persons in England, and some in Italy

itself, who held the latter of these faiths without the former; but for such she had no tolerance. Hence not only those who sympathised, as no doubt some Englishmen did sympathise, with Austria, but also those who, while wishing well to Italy, looked with suspicion upon Napoleon's interference, incurred her uncompromising wrath; and not even the conference of Villafranca, not even the demand for Nice and Savoy, could lead her to question Napoleon's sincerity, or to look with patience on the English policy and English public opinion of that day. The instinct of Italians has been truer. They have recognised the genuine sympathy and support which England extended to them on many occasions during the long struggle for Italian unity, and the friendship between the two countries to-day has its root in the events of forty and fifty years ago.

That Robert Browning did not entirely share his wife's views will be clear to all readers of 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau;' but there is not the smallest sign that this caused the least shadow of disagreement between them. Indeed for the moment the difference was practically annulled, since Robert Browning believed, what was very probably the case, that the Emperor's friendship for Italy was genuine, so far as it went. But it may be believed that he was less surprised than she when Napoleon's zeal for Italian independence stopped short at the frontiers of Venetia, and was transformed into an anxiety to get out of the war without further risk, and with an eye to material compensation in Savoy and Nice.

It is also right to bear in mind the failing condition of Mrs. Browning's health. The strain of anxiety unquestionably overtaxed her strength, and probably told upon her mental tone in a way that may account for much that seems exaggerated, and at times even hysterical, in her expressions regarding those who did not share her views. Her errors were noble and arose from a passionate nobility of character, to which much might be forgiven, if there were much to forgive.

To Miss Browning

Rome: [about February 1, 1859].

I am sure Robert has been too long about writing this time, dearest Sarianna. It did not strike either of us till this morning that it was so long. We have all been well; and Robert is whirled round and round so, in this most dissipated of places (to which Paris is really grave and quiet), that he scarcely knows if he stands on his feet or his head. . . .

Since Christmas Day I have been out twice, once to see Mr. Page's gorgeous picture (just gone to Paris), and once to run back again before the wind; but I am too susceptible. The weather has been glorious to everybody with some common sense in their lungs. And to-day it is possible even to *me*, they say, and I am preparing for an effort.

Pen is quite well and rosy. Still we hear of illness, and I am very particular and nervous about him. All Mr. Hawthorne's family have been ill one after another, and now he is struck himself with the fever.

Let me remember to say how the professor's letter seemed to say so much — too much.

Particularly just now. I for one can receive no compliments about 'English honesty,' &c., after the ignoble way we are behaving about Italy. I dare say dear M. Milsand (who doesn't sympathise much with our Italy) thinks it 'imprudent' of the Emperor to make this move, but that it is generous and magnanimous he will admit. The only great-hearted politician in Europe — but chivalry always came from France. The emotion here is profound — and the terror, among the priests.

Always I expected this from Napoleon, and, if he will carry out his desire, Peni and I are agreed to kneel down and kiss his feet. The pamphlet which proceeds from him is magnificent. I said it long ago — to Jessie White I said it,

'You would destroy,' said I, 'the only man who has it in his heart and head to do anything for Italy.'

Most happily Robert's and my protestation went to America in time; just before the present contingency. Yes, Jessie should not have permitted our names to be used so. Being passive even was a fault — yes, and more than a fault.

Robert is in great spirits and very well indeed. . . .

Ever your most affectionate,

Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome:] 43 Bocca di Leone: March 27, [1859].

My ever dearest Isa, — You don't write, not you! I wrote last, remember, and though you may not have liked all the politics of the same, you might have responded to some of the love, you naughty Isa; so I think I shall get up a 'cause célèbre' for myself (it shall be my turn now), and I shall prove (or try) that nobody has loved me (or can) up to this date of the 26th of March, 1859. Dearest Isa, seriously speaking, you must write, for I am anxious to know that you are recovering your good looks and proper bodily presence as to weight. Just now I am scarcely of sane mind about Italy. It even puts down the spirit-subject. I pass through cold stages of anxiety, and white heats of rage. Robert accuses me of being 'glad' that the new 'Times' correspondent has been suddenly seized with Roman fever. It is I who have the true fever — in my brain and heart. I am chiefly frightened lest Austria yield on unimportant points to secure the vital ones; and Louis Napoleon, with Germany and England against him, is in a very hard position. God save us all.

Massimo d' Azeglio[1] has done us the real honor of coming to see us, and seldom have I, for one, been more

[1] Prime Minister of Piedmont from 1849–52, and one of the most honourable and patriotic of Italian statesmen.

gratified. A noble chivalrous head, and that largeness of the political *morale* which I find nowhere among statesmen, except in the head of the French Government. Azeglio spoke bitterly of English policy, stigmatised it as belonging to a past age, the rags of old traditions. He said that Louis Napoleon had made himself great simply by comprehending the march of civilisation (the true Christianity, said Azeglio) and by leading it. Exactly what I have always thought. Azeglio disbelieves in any aim of territorial aggrandisement on the part of France. He is full of hope for Italy. It is '48 over again, said he, but with matured actors. He finds a unity of determination among the Italians wherever he goes.

Well, Azeglio is a man. Seldom have I seen a man whom I felt more sympathy towards. He has a large, clear, attractive 'sphere,' as we Swedenborgians say.

The pamphlet Collegno never reached us. The Papal Government has snatched it on the way. Farini's is very good. Thank you for all your kindness as to pamphlets (not letters, Isa! I distinguish in my gratitude). We lent Mr. Trollope's to Odo Russell,[1] the English plenipotentiary, and to Azeglio, so that it has produced fruit in our hands.

Did I write since Robert dined with the Prince of Wales? Col. Bruce called here and told me that though the budding royalty was not to be exposed to the influences of mixed society, the society of the most eminent men in Rome was desired for him, and he (Col. Bruce) knew it would 'gratify the Queen that the Prince should make the acquaintance of Mr. Browning.' Afterwards came the invitation, or 'command.' I told Robert to set them all right on Italian affairs, and to eschew compliments, which, you know, is his weak point. (He said the other day to Mrs. Story: 'I had a delightful evening yesterday at your house. I *never spoke to you once*,'

[1] Subsequently English ambassador at Berlin, and one of the plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Congress of 1878. Created Lord Ampthill in 1881, and died in 1884.

and encouraged an artist, who was 'quite dissatisfied with his works,' as he said humbly, by an encouraging — 'But, my dear fellow, if you were satisfied, you would be so *very easily* satisfied!' Happy! wasn't it?) Well, so I exhorted my Robert to eschew compliments and keep to Italian politics, and we both laughed, as at a jest. But really he had an opportunity, the subject was permitted, admitted, encouraged, and Robert swears that he talked on it higher than his breath. But, oh, the English, the English! I am unpatriotic and disloyal to a *crime*, Isa, just now. Besides which, as a matter of principle, I never put my trust in princes, except in the parvenus.

Not that the little prince here talked politics. But some of his suite did, and he listened. He is a gentle, refined boy, Robert says. . . .

May God bless you, dearest Isa. I am, your very loving,

Ba.

To Miss Browning

Rome: [about April 1859].

Dearest Sarianna, — People are distracting the 'Athenæums,' Robert complains, as they distract other things, but in time you will recover them, I hope. Mr. Leighton has made a beautiful pencil-drawing, highly finished to the last degree, of him;[1] very like, though not on the poetical side, which is beyond Leighton. Of this you shall have a photograph soon; and in behalf of it, I pardon a drawing of me which I should otherwise rather complain of, I confess.

We are all much saddened just now (in spite of war) by the state of Una Hawthorne, a lovely girl of fifteen, Mr. Hawthorne's daughter, who, after a succession of attacks of Roman fever, has had another, complicated with gastric, which has fallen on the lungs, and she only lives from hour to hour. Homœopathic treatment persisted in, which never answers in these fevers. Ah — there has been much illness

[1] Now in the possession of Mr. R. Barrett Browning.

in Rome. Miss Cushman has had an attack, but you would not recognise other names. We are well, however, Pen like a rose, and Robert still expanding. Dissipations decidedly agree with Robert, there's no denying that, though he's horribly hypocritical, and 'prefers an evening with me at home,' which has grown to be a kind of dissipation also.

We are in great heart about the war, as if it were a peace, without need of war. Arabel writes alarmed about our funded money, which we are not likely to lose perhaps, precisely because we are *not* alarmed. The subject never occurred to me, in fact. I was too absorbed in the general question — yes, and am.

So it dawns upon you, Sarianna, that things at Rome and at Naples are not quite what they should be. A certain English reactionary party would gladly make the Pope a *paratonnerre* to save Austria, but this won't do. The poor old innocent Pope would be paralytically harmless but for the Austrian, who for years has supported the corruptions here against France; and even the King of Naples would drop flat as a pricked bubble if Austria had not maintained that iniquity also. We who have lived in Italy all these years, know the full pestilent meaning of Austria everywhere. What is suffered in Lombardy *exceeds what is suffered elsewhere.* Now, God be thanked, here is light and hope of deliverance. Still you doubt whether the French are free enough themselves to give freedom! Well, I won't argue the question about what 'freedom' is. We shall be perfectly satisfied here with French universal suffrage and the ballot, the very same democratical government which advanced Liberals are straining for in England. But, however that may be, the Italians are perfectly contented at being liberated by the French, and entirely disinclined to wait the chance of being more honourably assisted by their 'free' and virtuous friend on the other side of the hedge (or channel), who is employed at present in buttoning up his own pockets lest peradventure he should lose a shilling:

giving dinners though, and the smaller change, to 'Neapolitan exiles,' whom only this very cry of 'war' has freed.

Robert and I have been of one mind lately in these things, which comforts me much. But the chief comfort is — the state of facts.

Massimo d'Azeglio came to see us, and talked nobly, with that noble head of his. I was far prouder of his coming than of another personal distinction you will guess at, though I don't pretend to have been insensible even to that. 'It is '48 over again,' said he, 'with matured actors.' In fact, the unity throughout Italy is wonderful. What has been properly called 'the crimes of the Holy Alliance' will be abolished this time, if God defends the right, which He will, I think. I have faith and hope.

But people are preparing to run, and perhaps we shall be forced to use the gendarmes against the brigands (with whom the country is beset, as in all cases of general disturbance) when we travel, but this is all the difference it will make with us. Tuscany is only restraining itself out of deference to France, and not to complicate her difficulties. War must be, if it is not already.

Yes, I was 'not insensible,' democratical as I am, and un-English as I am said to be. Col. Bruce told me that 'he knew it would be gratifying to the Queen that the Prince should make Robert's acquaintance.' 'She wished him to know the most eminent men in Rome.' It might be a weakness, but I was pleased.

Pen's and my love to the dearest Nonno and you.

Your affectionate

Ba.

In May, shortly after the outbreak of war, the Brownings returned to Florence, whither a division of French troops had been sent, under the command of Prince Napoleon. The Grand Duke had already retired before the storm, and a provisional government had been formed. It was here that

they heard the news of Magenta (June 4) and Solferino (June 24), with their wholly unexpected sequel, the armistice and the meeting of the two Emperors at Villafranca. The latter blow staggered even Mrs. Browning for the moment, but though her frail health suffered from the shock, her faith in Louis Napoleon was proof against all attack. She could not have known the good military reasons he had for not risking a reversal of the successes which he had won more through his enemy's defects than through the excellence of his own army or dispositions; but she found an explanation in the supposed intrigues of England and Germany, which frustrated his good intentions.

To Miss Browning

Florence: [about May 1859].

My dearest Sarianna, — You will like to hear, if only by a scratch, that we are back in Tuscany with all safety, after a very pleasant journey through an almost absolute solitude. Florence is perfectly tranquil and at the same time most unusually animated, what with the French troops and the passionate gratitude of the people. We have two great flags on our terrace, the French flag and the Italian, and Peni keeps a moveable little flag between them, which (as he says) 'he can take out in the carriage sometimes.' Pen is enchanted with the state of things in general, and the French camp in particular, which he came home from only in the dusk last night, having 'enjoyed himself so very much in seeing those dear French soldiers play at blind-man's buff.' They won't, however, remain long here, unless the Austrians threaten to come down on us, which, I trust, they will be too much absorbed to do. The melancholy point in all this is the dirt eaten and digested with a calm face by England and the English. Now that I have exhausted myself with indignation and protestation, Robert has taken up the same note, which is a comfort. I would

rather hear my own heart in his voice. Certainly it must be still more bitter for him than for me, seeing that he has more national predilections than I have, and has struggled longer to see differently. Not only the prestige, but the very respectability of England is utterly lost here — and nothing less is expected than her ultimate and open siding with Austria in the war. If she does, we shall wash our hands like so many Pilates, which will save us but not England.

We are intending to remain here as long as we can bear the heat, which is not just now too oppressive, though it threatens to be so. We must be somewhere near, to see after our property in the case of an Austrian approach, which is too probable, we some of us think; and I just hear that a body of the French will remain to meet the contingency. Our Italians are fighting as well as soldiers can.

Tell M. Milsand, with my love, that if I belonged to his country, I should feel very proud at this time. As to the Emperor, he is sublime. He will appear so to all when he comes out of this war (as I believe) with clean and empty hands. . . .

Robert gives ten scudi a month (a little more than two guineas) to the war as long as it lasts, and Peni is to receive half a paul every day he is good at his lessons, that he also may give to the great cause. I must write a word to the dear nonno. May God bless both of you, says your

Affectionate Sister,

BA.

To Mr. Browning, Senior

[Same date.]

Yes, indeed, I missed the revolution in Tuscany, dearest Nonno, which was a loss — but perhaps, in compensation (who knows?), I shall be in for an Austrian bombardment or brigandage, or something as good or bad. But, after all, you are not to be anxious about us because of a jest of mine. We have Tuscan troops on the frontier, and French

troops in the city, and although the Duchess of Parma has graciously given leave, they say, to the Austrians to cross her dominions in order to get into Tuscany, we shall be well defended. We are all full of hope and calm, and never doubt of the result. If ever there was a holy cause it is this; if ever there was a war on which we may lawfully ask God's blessing, it is this. The unanimity and constancy of the Italian people are beautiful to witness. The affliction of ten years has ripened these souls. Never was a contrast greater than what is to-day and what was in '48. No more distrust, nor division, nor vacillation, and a gratitude to the French nation which is quite pathetic.

Peni is all in a glow about Italy, and wishes he was 'great boy enough' to fight. Meantime he does his lessons for the fighters — half a paul a day when he is good.

Mr. del Bene thought him much improved in his music, and I hope he gets on in other things, and that when we bring him back to you (crowned with Italian laurels), you will think so too. Meanwhile think of us and love us, dearest Nonno. I always think of your kindness to me.

Your ever affectionate Daughter,

Ba.

To Mr. Ruskin

Casa Guidi: June 3, [1859].

My dear Mr. Ruskin, — We send to you every now and then somebody hungry for a touch from your hand; we who are famished for it ourselves. But this time we send you a man whom you will value perfectly for himself and be kind to from yourself, quite spontaneously. He is the American artist, Page, an earnest, simple, noble artist and man, who carries his Christianity down from his deep heart to the point of his brush. Draw him out to talk to you, and you will find it worth while. He has learnt much from Swedenborg, and used it in his views upon art. Much of it (if new) may sound to you wild and dreamy — but the dream

will admit of logical inference and philosophical induction, and when you open your eyes, it is still there.

He has not been successful in life — few are who are uncompromising in their manner of life. When I speak of life, I include art, which is life to him. I should like you to see what a wonder of light and colour and space and breathable air, he puts into his Venus rising from the sea — refused on the ground of nudity at the Paris Exhibition this summer. The loss will be great to him, I fear.

You will recognise in this name *Page*, the painter of Robert's portrait which you praised for its Venetian colour, and criticised in other respects. In fact, Mr. Page believes that he has discovered Titian's secret — and, what is more, he will tell it to you in love, and indeed to anybody else in charity. So I don't say that to bribe you.

Dear, dear Mr. Ruskin, we thank you and love you more than ever for your good word about our Italy. Oh, if you knew how hard it is and has been to receive the low, selfish, ignoble words with which this great cause has been pelted from England, not from her Derby government only, but from her parliament, her statesmen, her reformers, her leaders of the Liberal party, her free press — to receive such words full in our faces, nay, in the quick of our hearts, till we grow sick with loathing and hot with indignation — if you knew what it was and is, you would feel how glad and grateful we must be to have a right word from John Ruskin. Dear Mr. Ruskin, England has done terribly ill, ignobly ill, which is worse. That men of all parties should have spoken as they have, proves a state of public morals lamentable to admit. What — not even our poets with clean hands? Alfred Tennyson abetting Lord Derby? That to me was the heaviest blow of all.

Meanwhile we shall have a free Italy at least, for everything goes well here. Massimo d' Azeglio came to see us in Rome, and he said then, 'It is '48 with matured actors.' Indeed, there is a wonderful unanimity, calm, and resolution

everywhere in Italy. All parties are broken up into the one great national party. The feeling of the people is magnificent. The painful experience of ten years has borne fruit in their souls. No more distrust, no more division, no more holding back, no more vacillation. And Louis Napoleon — well, I think he is doing me credit — and you, dear Mr. Ruskin — for *you*, too, held him in appreciation long ago. A great man.

I beseech you to believe on my word (and we have our information from good and reliable sources), that the 'Times' newspaper built up its political ideas on the broadest foundation of *lies*. I use the bare word. You won't expel it, in the manner of the Paris Exhibition, for its nudity — lies — not mistakes. For instance, while the very peasants here are giving their crazie, the very labourers their day's work (once a week or so) — while everyone gives, and every man almost (who can go) goes — the 'Times' says that Piedmont had derived neither paul nor soldier from Tuscany. Tell me what people get by lying so? Faustus sold himself to the Devil. Does Austria pay a higher price, I wonder?

Such things I could tell you — things to moisten your eyes — to wring that burning eloquence of yours from your lips. But Robert waits to take this letter. Penini has adorned our terrace with two tricolour flags, the Italian tricolour and the French. May God bless you, dear friend. Speak again for Italy. If you could see with what *eyes* the Italian speaks of the 'English.' Our love to you, Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin — if we may — because we must. Write to us, do.

Ever affectionately yours,
R. B. and E. B. B.

To Miss Browning

Florence: [about June 1859].

My dearest Sarianna, — There is a breath of air giving one strength to hold one's pen at this moment. How

people can use swords in such weather it's difficult to imagine. We have been melting to nothing, like the lump of sugar in one's tea, or rather in one's lemonade, for tea grows to be an abomination before the sun. The heat, which lingered unusually, has come in on us with a rush of flame for some days past, suggesting, however, the degree beyond itself, which is coming. We stay on at Florence because we can't bear to go where the bulletin twice a day from the war comes less directly; and certainly we shall stay till we can't breath here any more. On which contingency our talk is to go somewhere for two months. Meanwhile we stay.

You can't conceive of the intense interest which is reigning here, you can't realise it, scarcely. In Paris there is vivid interest, of course, but that is from less immediate motives, except with persons who have relations in the army. Here it is as if each one had a personal enemy in the street below struggling to get up to him. When we are anxious we are pale; when we are glad we have tears in our eyes. This 'unnecessary' and 'inexcusable' war (as it has been called in England) represents the only hope of a nation agonising between death and life. You *talk* about our living or dying, but *we live or die*. That's the difference between you and us.

We shall live, however. The hope is rising into triumph. Nobody any more will say that the Italians fight ill. Remember that Garibaldi has with him simply the *volunteers* from all parts of Italy, not the trained troops. He and they are heroic (as with such conviction and faith they were sure to be), and the trained troops not less so. 'Worthy of fighting side by side with the French,' says the Emperor; while the French are worthy of their fame. 'The great military power' crumbles before them, because souls are stronger than bodies always. There is no such page of glory in the whole history of France. Great motives and great deeds. The feeling of profound gratitude to Napoleon

III., among this people here, is sublime from its unanimity and depth. . . .

All this excitement has made Florence quite unlike its quiet self, in spite of the flight of many residents and nearly all travellers. Even we have been stirred up to wander about more than our custom here. There's something that forbids us to sit at home; we run in and out after the bulletins, and to hear and give opinions; and then, in the rebound, we have been caught and sent several times to the theatre (so unusual for us) to see the great actor, Salvini, who is about to leave Florence. We saw him in 'Othello' and in 'Hamlet,' and he was very great in both, Robert thought, as well as I. Only his houses pine, because, as he says, the 'true tragedies spoil the false,' and the Italians have given up the theatres for the cafés at this moment of crisis. . . .

In best love,

Ba.

After Villafranca the immediate anxiety for news from the seat of war naturally came to an end, and the Brownings were able to escape from the heat of Florence to Siena, where they remained about three months.

To Miss Browning

Siena: [July–August 1859].

Dearest Sarianna, — This to certify that I am alive after all; yes, and getting stronger, and intending to be strong before long, though the sense left to me is of a peculiar frailty of being; no very marked opinion upon my hold of life. But life will last as long as God finds it useful for myself and others — which is enough, both for them and me.

So well I was with all the advantages of Rome in me,

looking so well, that I was tired of hearing people say so. But though it may sound absurd to you, it was the blow on the *heart* about the peace after all that excitement and exultation, that walking on the clouds for weeks and months, and then the sudden stroke and fall, and the impotent rage against all the nations of the earth — selfish, inhuman, wicked — who forced the hand of Napoleon, and truncated his great intentions. Many young men of Florence were confined to their beds by the emotion of the news. As for me, I was struck, couldn't sleep, talked too much, and (the intense heat rendering one more susceptible, perhaps) at last this bad attack came on. Robert has been perfect to me. For more than a fortnight he gave up all his night's rest to me, and even now he teaches Pen. They are well, I thank God. We stay till the end of September. Our Italians have behaved magnificently, steadfast, confident, never forgetting (except in the case of individuals, of course) their gratitude to France nor their own sense of dignity. Things must end well with such a people. Few would have expected it of the Italians. I hear the French ambassador was present at the opening of the Chambers the other day at Florence, which was highly significant.

I suppose you are by the sea, and I hope you and the dearest nonno are receiving as much good from air and water as you desired. May God bless you both.

Your ever affectionate Sister,

Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

Villa Alberti, Siena: Wednesday [July–August 1859].

My ever dearest, kindest Isa, — I can't let another day go without writing just a word to you to say that I am alive enough to love you. In fact, dear, I am a great deal better; no longer ground to dust with cough; able to sleep at

nights; and preparing to-day to venture on a little minced chicken, which I have resisted all the advances of hitherto. This proves my own opinion of myself, at least. I am extremely weak, reeling when I ought to walk, and glad of an arm to steer by. But the attack is over; the blister to the side, tell Dr. Gresonowsky, conquered the uneasiness there, and did me general good, I think. Now I have only to keep still and quiet, and do nothing useful, or the contrary, if possible, and not speak, and not vex myself more than is necessary on politics. I had a letter from Jessie Mario, dated Bologna, the other day, and feel a little uneasy at what she may be about there. It was a letter not written in very good taste, blowing the trumpet against all Napoleonists. Most absurd for the rest. Cavour had promised L. N. Tuscany for his cousin as the price of his intervention in Italy; and Prince Napoleon, finding on his arrival here that it 'wouldn't do,' the peace was made in a huff.

Absurd, certainly.

Robert advises me not to answer, and it may be as well, perhaps.

I dreamed lately that I followed a mystic woman down a long suite of palatial rooms. She was in white, with a white mask, on her head the likeness of a crown. I knew she was Italy, but I couldn't see through the mask. All through my illness political dreams have repeated themselves, in inscrutable articles of peace and eternal provisional governments. Walking on the mountains of the moon, hand in hand with a Dream more beautiful than them all, then falling suddenly on the hard earth-ground on one's head, no wonder that one should suffer. Oh, Isa, the tears are even now in my eyes to think of it!

And yet I have hope, and the more I consider, the more I hope.

There will be no intervention to interfere with us in Tuscany, and there is something *better behind,* which we none of us see yet.

We read to-day of the Florence elections. May God bless my Florence.

Dearest Isa, don't you fancy that you will get off with a day and night here. No, indeed. Also, I would rather you waited till I could talk, and go out, and enjoy you properly; and just now I am a mere rag of a Ba hung on a chair to be out of the way.

Robert is so very kind as to hear Pen's lessons, which keeps me easy about the child.

Heat we have had and have; but there's a great quantity of air — such blowings as you boast of at your villa — and I like this good open air and the quiet. I have seen nobody yet. . . .

Dearest Isa, I miss you, and love you. How perfect you are to me always.

Robert's true love, with Pen's. And I may send my love to Miss Field, may I not?

Yours, in tender affection,

BA.

Do write, and tell me everything.

Yes, England will do a little dabbling about constitutions and the like where there's nothing to lose or risk; and why does Mrs. Trollope say 'God bless them' for it? *I* never will forgive England the most damnable part she has taken on Italian affairs, never. The pitiful cry of 'invasion' is the continuation of that hound's cry, observe. Must we live and bear?

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 24, 1859 [postmark].

Dearest Fanny, — This is only to say that I wrote to you before your letter reached me, directing mine simply to the post-office of Cologne, and that I write now lest what went before should miss for want of the more specific address. Thank you, dear friend, for caring to hear of my health;

that, at least, *is* pleasant. I keep recovering strength by air, quiet, and asses' milk, and by hope for Italy, which consolidates itself more and more.

You will wonder at me, but these public affairs have half killed me. You know I *can't* take things quietly. Your complaint and mine, Fanny, are just opposite. For weeks and weeks, in my feverish state, I never closed my eyes without suffering 'punishment' under eternal articles of peace and unending lists of provisional governments. Do you wonder?

Observe — I believe entirely in the Emperor. He did at Villafranca what he could not help but do. Since then, he has simply changed the arena of the struggle; he is walking under the earth instead of on the earth, but *straight* and to unchanged ends.

This country, meanwhile, is conducting itself nobly. It is worthy of becoming a great nation.

And God for us all!

So you go to England really? Which I doubted, till your letter came.

It is well that you did not spend the summer here, for the heat has been ferocious; hotter, people from Corfu say, than it was ever felt there. Italy, however, is apt to be hottish in the summer, as we know very well.

The country about here, though not romantic like Lucca, is very pretty, and our windows command sunsets and night winds. I have not stirred out yet after three weeks of it; you may suppose how reduced I must be. I could scarcely *stand* at one time. The active evil, however, is ended, and strength comes somehow or other. Robert has had the perfect goodness not only to nurse me, but to teach Peni, who is good too, and rides a pony just the colour of his curls, to his pure delight. Then we have books and newspapers, English and Italian — the books from Florence — so we do beautifully.

Mr. Landor is here. There's a long story. Absolute

revolution and abdication from the Florence villa. He appeared one day at our door of Casa Guidi, with an oath on his soul never to go back. The end of it all is, that Robert has accepted office as Landor's guardian (! !) and is to 'see to him' at the request of his family in England; and there's to be an arrangement for Wilson to undertake him in a Florence apartment, which she is pleased at. He visits the Storys, who are in a villa here (the only inhabitants), and were very kind to him. Now he is in rooms in a house not far from us, waiting till we return to Florence. I have seen him only once, and then he looked better than he did in Florence, where he seemed dropping into the grave, scarcely able to walk a hundred yards. He longs for England, but his friends do not encourage his return, and so the best that can be done for him must be. Now he is in improved spirits and has taken to writing Latin alcaics on Garibaldi, which is refreshing, I suppose.

Ask at the post-office for my letter, but don't fancy that it may be a line more lively than this. No alcaics from me! One soul has gone from me, at least, the soul that writes letters.

May God bless you, dearest, kindest Fanny. Love me a little. Don't leave off feeling 'on private affairs' too much for *that*.

Robert's best love with that of your loving

BA.

To Mrs. Jameson

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 26 [1859].

Dearest friend, what have you thought of me?

I was no more likely to write to you about the 'peace' than about any stroke of personal calamity. The peace fell like a bomb on us all, and for my part, you may still find somewhere on the ground splinters of my heart, if you look hard. But by the time your letter reached me we had

recovered the blow *spiritually*, had understood that it was necessary, and that the Emperor Napoleon, though forced to abandon one arena, was prepared to carry on the struggle for Italy on another.

Therefore I should have answered your letter at once if I had not been seized with illness. Indeed, my dear, dear friend, you will hear from me no excuses. I have not been unkind, simply incapable.

I believe it was the violent mental agitation, the reaction from a state of exultation and joy in which I had been walking among the stars so many months; and the grief, anxiety, the struggle, the talking, all coming on me at a moment when the ferocious heat had made the body peculiarly susceptible; but one afternoon I went down to the Trollopes, had sight of the famous Ducal orders about bombarding Florence, and came home to be ill. Violent palpitations and cough; in fact, the worst attack on the chest I ever had in Italy. For two days and two nights it was more like *angina pectoris*, as I have heard it described; but this went off, and the complaint ran into its ancient pattern, thank God, and kept me *only* very ill, with violent cough all night long; my poor Robert, who nursed me like an angel, prevented from sleeping for full three weeks. When there was a possibility I was lifted into a carriage and brought here; stayed two days at the inn in Siena, and then removed to this pleasant airy villa. Very ill I was after coming, and great courage it required to come; but change of air was absolutely a condition of living, and the event justified the risk. For now I am quite myself, have done crying 'Wolf,' and end this lamentable history by desiring you to absolve me for my silence. We have been here nearly a month. My strength, which was so exhausted that I could scarcely stand unsupported, is coming back satisfactorily, and the cough has ceased to vex me at all. Still, I am not equal to driving out. I hope to take my first drive in a very few days though, and the very asses

are ministering to me — in milk. All the English physicians had found it convenient (the beloved Grand Duke being absent) to leave Florence, and Zanetti was attending the Piedmontese hospitals, so that I had to attend me none of the old oracles — only a Prussian physician (Dr. Gresonowsky), a very intelligent man, of whom we knew a little personally, and who had a strong political sympathy with me. (He and I used to sit together on Isa Blagden's terrace and relieve ourselves by abusing each other's country; and whether he expressed most moral indignation against England or I against Prussia, remained doubtful.) Afterwards he came to cure me, and was as generous in his profession as became his politics. People are usually very kind to us, I must say. Think of that man following us to Siena, uninvited, and attending me at the hotel two days, then refusing recompense.

Well, now let me speak of our Italy and the peace. 'Immoral,' you say? Yes, immoral. But not immoral on the part of Napoleon who had his hand forced; only immoral on the part of those who by infamies of speech and intrigue (in England and Germany), against which I for one had been protesting for months, brought about the complicated results which forced his hand. Never was a greater or more disinterested deed intended and almost completed than this French intervention for Italian independence; and never was a baser and more hideous sight than the league against it of the nations. Let me not speak.

For the rest, if it were not for Venetia (Zurich[1] keeps its secrets so far) the peace would have proved a benefit rather than otherwise. We have had time to feel our own strength, to stand on our own feet. The vain talk about Napoleon's intervening militarily on behalf of the Grand Duke has

[1] The conferences for the arrangement of the final treaty of peace were held at Zurich.

simply been the consequence of statements without foundation in the English and German papers; and also in some French Ultramontane papers. Napoleon with his own lips, *after the peace*, assured our delegates that no force should be used. And he has repeated this on every possible occasion. At Villafranca, when the Emperor of Austria insisted on the return of Dukes, he acceded, on condition they were recalled. He 'did not come to Italy to dispossess the sovereigns,' as he had previously observed, but to give the power of election to the people. Before we left Rome this spring he had said to the French ambassador, 'If the Tuscans like to recall their Grand Duke, *qu'est-ce que cela me fait?*' He simply said the same at Villafranca.

Count de Reiset was sent to Florence, Modena, and Parma, to '*constater*,' not to '*impose*,' and the whole policy of Napoleon has been to draw out a calm and full expression of the popular mind. Nobly have the people of Italy responded. Surely there is not in history a grander attitude than this assumed by a nation half born, half constituted, scarcely named yet, but already capable of self-restraint and dignity, and magnanimous faith. We are full of hope, and should be radiant with joy, except for Venetia.

Dearest friend, the war did more than 'give a province to Piedmont.' The first French charge *freed Italy potentially* from north to south. At this moment Austria cannot stir anywhere. Here 'we live, breathe, and have our national being.' Certainly, if Napoleon did what the 'Times' has declared he would do — intervene with armed force against the people, prevent the elections, or *tamper* with the elections by means of — such means as he was 'familiar' with; if he did these things, I should cry aloud, 'Immoral, vile, a traitor!' But the facts deny all these imputations. He has walked steadily on along one path, and the development of Italy as a nation is at the end of it.

Of course the first emotion on the subject of the peace

was rage as well as grief. For one day in Florence all his portraits and busts disappeared from the shop windows; and I myself, to Penini's extreme disgust (who insisted on it that his dear Napoleon couldn't do anything wrong, and that the fault was in the telegraph), wouldn't let him wear his Napoleon medal. Afterwards — as Ferdinando said — 'Siamo stati un po' troppo furiosi davvero, signora;' *that* came to be the general conviction. Out came the portraits again in the sun, and the Emperor's bust, side by side with Victor Emmanuel's, adorns the room of our 'General Assembly.' There are individuals, of course, who think that through whatever amount of difficulty and complication, he should have preserved his first programme. But these are not the wiser thinkers. He had to judge for France as well as for Italy. As Mr. Trollope said to me in almost the first fever, 'It is upon the cards that he has acted in the wisest and most conscientious manner possible for all, — or it is on the cards etc.'

The difficulty now is at Naples.

There will be a Congress, of course. A Congress was in the first programme; after the war, a Congress.

But, dearest Mona Nina, if you want to get calumniated, hated, lied upon, and spat upon (in a spiritual sense), try and do a good deed from disinterested motives in this world. That's my lesson.

I have been told upon rather good authority that Cavour's retirement is simply a feint, and that he will recover his position presently.

What weighs on my heart is Venetia. Can they do anything at Zurich to modify that heavy fact?

You see I am not dead yet, dear, dearest friend. And while alive at all, I can't help being in earnest on these questions. I am a Ba, you know. Forgive me when I get too much 'riled' by your England.

You will know by this time that the 'proposition' you approved of was French.

What made the very help of Prussia unacceptable to Austria was the circumstance of Prussia's using that opportunity of Austria's need to wriggle herself to the military headship of the Confederation. Austria would rather have lost Lombardy (and more) than have accepted such a disadvantage. Hence the coldness, the cause of which is scarcely avowable. Selfish and pitiful nations!

Dear Isa Blagden writes me all the political news of Florence. She is well, and will come to pay us a visit before long. We remain here till September ends, and then return to Casa Guidi.

I had a letter from Bologna from Jessie, which threw me into a terror lest the Mazzinians should come to Italy just in time to ruin us. The letter (not unkind to me) was as contrary to facts and reason as possible. I was too ill to write at the time, and Robert would not let me answer it afterwards.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Martin

Villa Alberti, Siena: September [1859].

My dearest Mrs. Martin, — As you talk of palpitations and the newspapers, and then tell me or imply that you are confined for light and air to the 'Times' on the Italian question, I am moved with sympathy and compassion for you, and anxious not to lose a post in answering your letter. My dear, dear friends, I beseech you to believe *nothing* which you have read, are reading, or are likely to read in the 'Times' newspaper, unless it contradicts all that went before. The criminal conduct of that paper from first to last, and the immense amount of injury it has occasioned in the world, make me feel that the hanging of the Smethursts and Ellen Butlers would be irredeemable cruelty while these writers are protected by the Law. . . .

Of course you must feel perplexed. The paper takes up different sets of falsities, quite different and contradictory, and treats them as facts, and writes 'leaders' on them, as if they were facts. The reader, at last, falls into a state of confusion, and sees nothing clearly except that somehow or other, for something that he has done or hasn't done, has intended or hasn't intended, Louis Napoleon is a rascal, and we ought to hate him and his.

Well, leave the 'Times' — though from the 'Times' and the like base human movements in England and Germany resulted, more or less directly, that peace of Villafranca which threw us all here into so deep an anguish, that I, for one, have scarcely recovered from it even to this day.

Let me tell you. We were living in a glow of triumph and gratitude; and for me, it seemed to me as if I walked among the angels of a new-created world. All faces at Florence shone with one thought and one love. You can scarcely realise to yourself what it was at that time. Friends were more than friends, and strangers were friends. The rapture of the Italians — their gratitude to the French, the simple joy with which the French troops understood (down to the privates) that they had come to deliver their brothers, and to go away with empty hands; all these things, which have been calumniated and denied, were wonderfully beautiful. Scarcely ever in my life was I so happy. I was happy, not only for Italy, but for the world — because I thought that this great deed would beat under its feet all enmities, and lift up England itself (at last) above its selfish and base policy. Then, on a sudden, came the peace. It was as if a thunderbolt fell. For one day, every picture and bust of the Emperor vanished, and the men who would have died for him, before that sun, half articulated a curse on his head. But the next day we were no longer mad, and as the days past, we took up hope again, and the more thoughtful among our politicians began to understand the situation. There was, however, a painful change. Before, difference of

opinion was unknown, and there was no sort of anxiety (a doubt of the result of the war never crossing anyone's mind). Napoleon in the thickest of the fire, with one epaulette shot off, was a symbol intelligible to the whole population. But when he disappeared from the field and entered the region of spirits and diplomats — when he walked under the earth instead of on the surface — though he walked with equal loyalty and uprightness, then people were sanguine or fearful according to their temperament, and the English and Austrian newspapers attributing the worst motives and designs, troubled the thoughts of many. Still, both the masses (with their blind noble faith), and the leaders with their intelligence, held fast their hopes, and the consequence has been the magnificent spectacle which this nation now offers to Europe, and which for dignity, calm, and unanimous determination may seek in vain for its parallel in history. Now we are very happy again, full of hope and faith. . . .

We shall probably go to Rome again for the winter, as Florence is considered too cold. There will be disturbances that way in all probability; but we are bold as to such things. The Pope is hard to manage, even for the Emperor. It is hard to cut up a feather bed into sandwiches with the finest Damascus blade, but the end will be attained somehow. I wish I could see clearly about Venetia. There are intelligent and thoughtful Italians who are hopeful even for Venetia, and certainly, the Emperor of Austria's offer to Tuscany (not made to the Assembly, as the 'Times' said, but murmured about by certain agents) implies a consciousness on his part of holding Venetia, with a broken *wrist* at least.

As to the Duchies never for a moment did I believe in armed intervention. Napoleon distinctly with his own lips promised our delegates, after the peace, and before he left Italy, that he would neither do it nor permit it. And afterwards, in Paris, again and again. He accepted the Austrian

proposition under the condition simply that the Dukes were recalled by the people, not in defiance of the popular will. He has been loyal throughout both to Austria and to Italy, and to his own original programme, which did not contemplate dispossessing sovereigns but freeing peoples.

Italy for the Italians — and so it will be. For Prince Napoleon, when he was in Florence he might have remained there and delighted everybody. I *know* even that a person high in office felt the way towards a proposal of the kind, and that he answered in a manner considered too '*tranchant*,' 'No, no, *that* would suit neither the Emperor nor England; et pour moi, je ne le voudrais pas.' He used every opportunity at that time of advising the fusion, about which people were much less unanimous than they are now.

But calumny never dies (*like me*.'). Mr. Russell, Lord John's nephew, the quasi-minister at Rome, very acute, and liberal too (by the English standard) being on his road to Rome from London last week proposed paying us a visit, and we had him here two days (in a valuable spare room !). He told me that Napoleon had been too *fin* for the English Government. He had *induced them to acknowledge the Tuscan vote* (observe that fact, dearest friends) induced them to acknowledge the Tuscan vote; and now here was his game. He had forbidden Piedmont to accept the fusion,[1] and therefore Piedmont must refuse. The consequence of which would be that there must be another vote in Tuscany, which would favor Prince Napoleon, and that we, having accepted the first vote, must accept the second, the Emperor throwing up his hands and crying, '*Who would have thought it?*'

We told him that he and the English Government were so far out in their conclusions, that Piedmont, instead of refusing, would accept conditionally; but he sighed, 'hoped

[1] Of Tuscany with Piedmont, which was voted by Tuscany in August. Modena, Parma, and Romagna did the same, and so made the critical step towards the creation of an united Italy.

it might be so,' in the way in which preposterous opinions are civilly put away.

Scarcely was he gone, when the conditional acceptance was known.

How much more I could tell you. But one can't write all. The first battle in the north of Italy freed Italy *potentially* from north to south. Our political life here in the centre is a proof of this. The conduct of the Italians is admirable, but last year they *could not* have assumed this attitude. They were a bound people. And even now, if the Emperor removed his hand from Austria, we should have the foreign intervention, and no hope.

We are ready and willing to fight, observe. The 'Times' may take back its words. But to oppose the whole Austrian Empire with our unorganised, however heroic, forces, is impossible. We might *die*, indeed. . . .

May God bless both of you always. I have pretty good letters from home. Home! what's home?

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

Read 'La Foi des Traités;' it is from the hand of Louis Napoleon. So that I was prepared for the amnesty and for what follows.

The following letters to Mr. Chorley relate to Mrs. Browning's poem 'A Tale of Villafranca,' which was published in the 'Athenæum' for September 24, and subsequently included in the volume of 'Poems before Congress' (*Poetical Works*, iv. 195).

To Mr. Chorley

Villa Alberti, Siena: September 12, [1859].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — This isn't a *letter*, as you will see at a glance. I should have written to you long since, and have also sent this poem (which solicits a place in the 'Athenæum') if I had not been very ill and been very slow in getting well. We wanted to answer your kind letter, and shall. As for my poem, be so good as to see it put in, in spite of its good and true politics, which you 'Athenæum' people (being English) will dissent from altogether. Say so, if you please, but let me in. 'Strike, but hear me.' I have been living and dying for Italy lately. You don't know how vivid these things are to us, which serve for conversation at London dinner parties.

Ah — dear Mr. Chorley. The bad news about poor Lady Arnould will have affected you as it did Robert a few days ago. I do pity so our unhappy friend, Sir Joseph. Tell us, if you can and will, what you hear.

We came here from Florence five or six weeks since, when I was very unfit for moving, but change of air and a cooler air and repose had grown necessary. We are at a villa two miles from Siena, where we look at scarlet sunsets, over purple hills, and have the wind nearly all day. Mr. and Mrs. Story are half a mile off in another villa, and Mr. Landor at a stone's cast. Otherwise the solitude is absolute. Mr. Russell spent two days with us on his way to resume office at Rome. I should remember that. . . .

To Mr. Chorley

Siena: Sunday [September–October 1859].

Thank you, my dear Mr. Chorley, I submit gratefully to being snubbed for my politics. In return I will send to your private ear an additional stanza which should interpose

as the real *seventh* but was left out. I did not send it to you the day after my note, though sorely tempted to do so, because it seemed to me likely to annul any small chance of 'Athenæum' tolerance which might fall to me. Would it have done so, do you think?

> 'A great deed in this world of ours!
> Unheard of the pretence is.
> It plainly threatens the Great Powers;
> Is fatal in all senses.
> A just deed in the world! Call out
> The rifles! . . . be not slack about
> The National Defences.'

Certainly if I don't guess 'the Sphinx' right, some of your English guessers in the 'Times' and elsewhere fail also, as events prove. The clever 'Prince-Napoleon-for-Central-Italy' guess,[1] for instance, has just fallen through, by declaration of the 'Moniteur.' Most absurd it was always. At one time the Prince might have taken the crown by acclamation. He was almost *rude* about it when he was in Tuscany. And even after the peace, members of the present Government were not averse, were much the contrary indeed. At that time the autonomy was still dear, we had not made up our minds to the fusion. Now, *è altra cosa*, and to imagine that a man like the French Emperor would have waited till now, producing, by the opportunities he has given, the present complication, *in order* to impose the Prince, is absurd on the very face of it.

While standers-by guess, the comfort is that circumstances ripen. We are in spirits about our Italy. The dignity, the constancy, the calm, are admirable, as the unanimity of the people is wonderful. Even the contadini have rallied to the Government, and the cry of enthusiasm to

[1] It was supposed that Napoleon contemplated constituting Central Italy, or at least Tuscany, into a kingdom for his brother Jerome, and that it was for this reason that the latter had been sent to Florence with a French corps at the beginning of the war.

which the cross of Savoy was uncovered in the market place of Siena yesterday was a thrilling thing. Also we will fight, be it understood, whenever fighting shall be necessary. At present, the right arm of Austria is broken ; she cannot hold the sword since Solferino, at least in central Italy. Let those who doubt our debt to France, remember where we were last year, and see what our political life is now — real, vivid, unhindered ! Our moral qualities are our own, but our practical opportunities come from another ; we could not have made them by force of moral qualities, great as those are allowed to be. And how striking the growth of this people since 1848. Massimo d' Azeglio said to Robert and me, ' It is '48 over again with matured actors.' But it is even more than that : it is '48 over again with regenerated actors.

All internal jealousies at an end, all suspicions quenched, all selfish policies dissolved. Florence forgets herself for Italy. This is grand. Would that England, that pattern of moral nations, would forget herself for the sake of something or someone beyond. *That* would be grand.

I wish you were here, my dear Mr. Chorley, since I am wishing in vain, though we are almost at the close of our stay in this pretty country. We have a villa with beautiful sights from all the windows ; and there, on the hill opposite, live Mr. and Mrs. Story, and within a stone's throw, in a villino, lives the poor old lion Landor, who, being sorely buffeted by his family at Fiesole, far beyond ' kissing with tears ' (though Robert did what he could), took refuge with us at Casa Guidi one day, broken-hearted and in wrath. He stays here while we stay, and then goes with us to Florence, where Robert has received the authorisation of his English friends to settle him in comfort in an apartment of his own, with my late maid, Wilson (who married our Italian man-servant), to take care of him ; and meanwhile the quiet of this place has so restored his health and peace of mind, that he is able to write awful Latin alcaics, to say nothing of hexameters and pentameters, on the

wickedness of Louis Napoleon. Yes, dear Mr. Chorley, poems which might appear in the 'Athenæum' without disclaimer, and without injury to the reputation of that journal.

Am I not spiteful? I assure you I couldn't be spiteful a short time ago, so very ill I have been. Now it is different, and every day the strength returns. What remains, however, is a certain necessity of not facing the Florence wind this winter, and of going again to Rome, in spite of probable revolutions there. We talk of going in the early part of November. Why won't you come to Rome and give us meeting? Foolish speech, when I know you won't. We shall be in Florence probably at the end of the present week, to stay there until the journey further south begins. I shall regret this silence. And little Penini too will have his regrets, for he has been very happy here, made friends with the contadini, has helped to keep the sheep, to run after straggling cows, to play at '*nocini*' (did you ever hear of that game), and to pick the grapes at the vintage — driving in the grape-carts (exactly of the shape of the Greek chariots), with the grapes heaped up round him; and then riding on his own pony, which Robert is going to buy for him (though Robert never spoils him; no, not he, it is only *I* who do that!), galloping through the lanes on this pony the colour of his curls. I was looking over his journal (Pen keeps a journal), and fell on the following memorial which I copy for you — I must.

'This is the happiest day of my hole (*sic*) life, for now dearest Vittorio Emanuele is really *nostro re*.'

Pen's weak point does not lie in his politics, Mr. Chorley, but in his spelling. When his contadini have done their day's work he takes it on him to read aloud to them the poems of the revolutionary Venetian poet Dall' Ongaro, to their great applause. Then I must tell you of his music. He is strong in music for ten years old — and plays a sonata of Beethoven already (in E flat — opera 7) and the first four books of Stephen Heller; to say nothing of

various pieces by modern German composers in which there is need of considerable execution. Robert is the maestro, and sits by him two hours every day, with an amount of patience and persistence really extraordinary. Also for two months back, since I have been thrown out of work, Robert has heard the child all his other lessons. Isn't it very, very good of him?

Do write to us and tell me how your sister is, and also how you are in spirits and towards the things of the world? Give her my love — will you?

I had a letter some time ago from poor Jessie Mario, from Bologna. Respect her. She hindered her husband from fighting with Garibaldi for his country, because Garibaldi fought under L. N., which was so highly improper. Her letter was not unkind to me, but altogether and insanely wrong as I considered. (Not more wrong though, and much less wicked, than the 'Times.') I was too ill at the time to answer it, and afterwards Robert would not let me, but I should have liked to do it; it's such a comfort to a woman (and a man?) to *sfogarsi*, as we say here. Also, I was really uneasy at what might be doing at Bologna; so in spite of friendship, it was a relief to me to hear of the police taking charge of all overt possibilities in that direction.

Is it really true that Adam Bede is the work of Miss Evans? The woman (as I have heard of her) and the author (as I read her) do not hold together. May God bless you, my dear friend. Robert shall say so for himself.

Ever affectionately yours,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

My dear Mr. Chorley, — Reading over what I have written I find that I have been so basely ungrateful as not to say the thing I would when I would thank you. Your *Dedication* will be accepted with a true sense of kindness and honor together; I shall be proud and thankful. But perhaps you have changed your mind in the course of this long silence.

And now where's room for Robert?

To Miss I. Blagden

Villa Alberti, [Siena]:
Tuesday [September–October, 1859].

Ever dearest Isa, — Yes, I am delighted.

Evviva il nostro re! It isn't a very distinct acceptance, however, but as distinct as could be expected reasonably.[1] Under conditions, of course.

On Friday morning before noon up to our door came Mr. Russell's carriage. He had closed with Robert's proposition at once, and we made room for him without much difficulty, and were very glad to see him. I didn't go in to dinner, and he and Robert went to the Storys in the evening — so that it wasn't too much for me — and then I really like him — he is refined and amiable, and acute and liberal (as an Englishman can be), full of 'traditions' or prejudices, to use the right word. To my surprise he *knew* scarcely anything; and, as I modestly observed to Robert, 'didn't understand the Italian question half as well as I understand it.' Of course there was a quantity of gossip in the anti-Napoleon sense; how the Emperor told the King of the peace over the soup, twirling his moustache; and how the King swore like a trooper at the Emperor in consequence; and how the Emperor took it all very well — didn't mind at all — and how, and how — things which are manifestly impossible and which Robert tells me I ought not to repeat, in order not to multiply such vain tales. There is Metternich the younger (ambassador in Paris), a personal friend of Odo Russell's, in whose bosom Louis Napoleon seems to pour the confidences of his heart about that '*coquin de Cavour* who led him into the Italian war,'

[1] Napoleon being opposed to the idea of an united Italy, Victor Emmanuel did not consider it wise to accept the proffered crown of Central Italy while a French army was still in the country and the terms of peace were not finally settled.

&c. &c., but it simply proves to you and me how an Austrian can lie, which we could guess before.

My *facts* are these: First, Ferdinando IV.[1] has an ambassador in Rome, who has been received officially by the Pope (!!) ('The coolest thing that ever was'), and is paid out of the private purse of the Royal Highness. There is another ambassador at Naples, and another at Vienna — on the same terms; so let no one talk of 'Déchéance.'

Then let me tell you what Mr. Russell said to me. 'Napoleon,' said he, 'has been too *fin* for the English Government. He made us acknowledge the Tuscan vote. Now he has strictly forbidden Piedmont to accept, and Piedmont must therefore refuse. The consequences of which will be that there must be another vote in Tuscany, by which Prince Napoleon will be elected; and we, having acknowledged the first vote, must acknowledge the second.'

Of course I protested; disbelieved in the forbidding, and believed in the accepting. He 'hoped it might be so' — in the civil way with which people put away preposterous opinions — and left us on Saturday night at ten, just too late to hear of the 'fait accompli.'

Out of all *that*, I rescue my fact that *Napoleon made the English Government acknowledge the Tuscan vote.*

Don't let Kate put any of this into American papers, because Mr. Russell was our guest, observe, and spoke trustingly to us. He had just arrived from England, and went on to Rome without further delay.

The word *Venice* makes my heart beat. Has Guiducci any grounds for hope about Venice? If Austria could be *bought* off at any price! Something has evidently been promised at Villafranca on the subject of Venice; and evidently the late strengthening of the hands of Piedmont

[1] The new Duke of Tuscany. He had succeeded to this now very shadowy throne on July 21 of this year.

will render the Austrian occupation on any terms more and more difficult and precarious.

I should agree with you on Prince Napoleon, if it were not that I want the Emperor's disinterestedness to remain in its high place. We can't spare great men and great deeds out of the honour of the world. There are so few.

For the rest, the Prince would have been a popular and natural choice at one time, and as far as central Italy was concerned. Also he is very liberal in opinion, and full of ideas, I have been told.

But the fusion is a wiser step *now*, and altogether — even if we could spare the Emperor's fame. Do you remember the obloquy he suffered for Neufchâtel? and how it came out that, if he pressed his conditions, it was simply because he meant to fight for the independence of the State? and how at last the Swiss delegates went to Paris to offer their gratitude for the deliverance he had attained for the people? His loyalty will come out clean before the eyes of his enemies now as then. We agree absolutely. And Robert does not dissent, I think. Facts begin to be conclusive to him.

You are an angel, dearest Isa, with the tact of a woman of the world. This in reference to the note you sent me, and your answer. You could not have done better — not at all.

Our kind love to Kate — and mind you give our regards to Dr. Gresonowsky. Also to Mr. Jarves — poor Mr. Jarves — how sorry I am about the pictures!

Robert will write another time, he says, 'with kindest love.'

To Miss Browning

[Siena: September–October, 1859.]

My dearest Sarianna, — We are on the verge of returning to Florence, for a short time — only to pack up, I believe, and go further south — to 'meet the revolution,' tell the

dearest Nonno, with my love. The case is that though I am really convalescent and look well (Robert has even let me take to Penini a little, which is conclusive), it is considered dangerous for me to run the risk of even a Florence winter. You see I have been *very* ill. The physician thought there was pressure of the lungs on the *heart*, and, under those circumstances, that I *must* avoid irritation of the lungs by any cold. Say nothing which can reach my sisters and frighten them; and after all I care very little about doctors, except that I do know myself how hard renewals of the late attack would go with me. But I mean to take care, and use God's opportunities of getting strong again. Also it seems to me that I have taken a leap within these ten days, and that the strength comes back in a fuller tide. After all, it is not a cruel punishment to us to have to go to Rome again this winter, though it will be an undesirable expense, and though we did wish to keep quiet this winter, the taste for constant wanderings having passed away as much for me as for Robert. We begin to see that by no possible means can one spend as much money to so small an end. And then we don't work so well — don't live to as much use, either for ourselves or others. Isa Blagden bids us observe that we pretend to live at Florence, and are not there much above two months in the year, what with going away for the summer and going away for the winter. It's too true. It's the drawback of Italy. To live in one place here is impossible for us almost, just as to live out of Italy at all is impossible for us. It isn't caprice — that's all I mean to say — on our part.

Siena pleases us very much. The silence and repose have been heavenly things to me, and the country is very pretty, though no more than pretty — nothing marked or romantic, no mountains (did you fancy us on the mountains?) except so far off as to be like a cloud only, on clear days, and no water. Pretty, dimpled ground, covered with low vineyards; purple hills, not high, with the sunsets clothing

them. But I like the place, and feel loth to return to Florence from this half-furnished villa and stone floors. The weather is still very hot, but no longer past bearing, and we are enjoying it, staying on from day to day. Robert proposed Palermo instead of Rome, but I shrink a little from the prospect of our being cut up into mincemeat by patriotic Sicilians, though the English fleet (which he reminds me of) might obtain for you and for England the most 'satisfactory compensation' of the pecuniary kind. At Rome I shall not be frightened, knowing my Italians. Then there will be more comfort, and, besides, no horrible sea-voyage. Some Americans have told us that the Mediterranean is twice as bad as the Atlantic. I always thought it *twice as bad as anything*, as people say elegantly. We shall not leave Florence till November. Robert must see W. Landor (his adopted son, Sarianna) settled in his new apartment, with Wilson for a duenna. It's an excellent plan for him, and not a bad one for Wilson. He will pay a pound (English) a week for his three rooms, and she is to receive twenty-two pounds a year for the care she is to take of him, besides what is left of his rations. Forgive me if Robert has told you this already. Dear darling Robert amuses me by talking of his 'gentleness and sweetness.' A most courteous and refined gentleman he is, of course, and very affectionate to Robert (as he ought to be), but of self-restraint he has not a grain, and of suspiciousness many grains. Wilson will run certain risks, and I for one would rather not meet them. What do you say to dashing down a plate on the floor when you don't like what's on it? And the contadini at whose house he is lodging now have been already accused of opening desks. Still, upon that occasion (though there was talk of the probability of Landor's throat being 'cut in his sleep'), as on other occasions, Robert succeeded in soothing him, and the poor old lion is very quiet on the whole, roaring softly, to beguile the time, in Latin alcaics against his wife and Louis Napoleon. He laughs

carnivorously when I tell him that one of these days he will have to write an ode in honour of the Emperor, to please *me*.

Little Pen has been in the utmost excitement lately about his pony, which Robert is actually going to buy for him. I am said to be the spoiler, but mark! I will confess to you that, considering how we run to and fro, it never would have entered into the extravagance of my love to set up a pony for Penini. When I heard of it first, I opened my eyes wide, only no amount of discretion on my part could enable me to take part against both Pen and Robert in a matter which pleases Pen. I hope they won't combine to give me an Austrian daughter-in-law when Peni is sixteen. So I say 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'Certainly,' and the pony is to be bought, and carried to Rome (fancy that!), and we are to hunt up some small Italian princes and princesses to ride with him at Rome (I object to Hatty Hosmer, who has been thrown thirty times).[1] In fact, Pen has been very coaxing about the pony. He has beset Robert in private and then, as privately, entreated me, 'if papa spoke to me about the pony, not to *discourage* him.' So I discouraged nobody, but am rather triumphantly glad, upon the whole, that we have done such a very foolish, extravagant thing.

Robert will have told you, I am sure, what a lovely picture Mr. Wilde the American artist (staying with the Storys) has made of Penini on horseback, and presented to me. It is to be exhibited in the spring in London, but before then, either at Rome or Florence, we will have a photograph made from it to send you. By the way, Mr. Monroe failed us about the photograph from the bust. He said he had tried in vain once, but would try again. The child is no less pretty and graceful than he was, and he rides, as he does everything, with a grace which is striking. He gallops like the wind, and with an absolute fearlessness — he who is timid about sleeping in a room by himself, poor darling.

[1] Not on account of bad riding, be it observed, but of daring and venturesome riding.

He has had a very happy time here (besides the pony) having made friends with all the contadini, who adore him, and helped them to keep the sheep, catch the stray cows, drive the oxen in the grape-carts, and to bring in the vintage generally, besides reading and expounding revolutionary poems to them at evening. The worst of it was, while it lasted, that he ate so many grapes he could eat nothing else whatever. Still, he looks rosy and well, and there's nothing to regret. . . .

Robert has let his moustache and beard grow together, and looks very picturesque. I thought I should not like the moustache, but I do. He is in very good looks altogether, though, in spite of remonstrances, he has given up walking before breakfast, and doesn't walk at any time half enough. *I* was in fault chiefly, because he both sate up at night with me and kept by me when I was generally ill in the mornings. So I oughtn't to grumble — but I do. . . . Love to dear M. Milsand. We are in increasing spirits on Italian affairs.

Your very affectionate

Ba.

In October they returned to Florence, though only for about six weeks, before moving on to Rome for the winter.

To Mrs. Jameson

[Florence]: Casa Guidi: Friday [October 1859].

Ever dearest Mona Nina, — Here we are at our Florence, very thankful for the advantages of our Siena residence. God has been kind. When I think how I went away and how I came back, it seems to me wonderful. For the latter fortnight the tide of life seemed fairly to set in again, and now I am quite well, if not as strong — which, of course, could not be in the time. My doctor opened his eyes to see me yesterday so right in looks and ways. But we spend the winter in Rome, because the great guns of the revolu-

tion (and even the small daggers) will be safer to encounter than any sort of tramontana. To tell you the truth, dearest friend, there have been moments when I have 'despaired of the republic' — that is, doubted much whether I should ever be quite well again; I mean as tolerably well as it is my normal state to be. So severe the attack was altogether.

As to political affairs, I will use the word of Penini's music-master when asked the other day how they went on — '*Divinamente*,' said he. Things are certainly going *divinamente*. I observe that, while politicians by profession, by the way, have various opinions, and hope and fear according to their temperaments, *the people* here are steadily sanguine, distrusting nobody if it isn't a Mazzinian or a codino, and looking to the end with a profound interest, of course, but not any inquietude. '*Divinamente*' things are going on.

There is an expectation, indeed, of fighting, but only with the Pope's troops (and we all know what a '*soldato del papa*' means), or with such mongrel defenders as can be got up by the convicts of Modena or Tuscany to give us an occasion of triumph presently. The expected outburst in Sicily and the Neapolitan states will simply extend the movement. That's *our* way of thinking and hoping. May God defend the right!

Mr. Probyn, a Liberal M.P., has come out here to appreciate the situation, and said last night that, after visiting the north of Italy and speaking with the chiefs, he is full of hope. Not quite so is Cartwright, whom you know, and who came to us at Siena. But Mr. Cartwright exceeds Dr. Cumming in the view of Napoleon, who isn't antichrist to him, but is assuredly the devil. I like Mr. Cartwright, observe, but I don't like his modes of political thinking, which are 'after the strictest sect' and the reddest tape English. He and his family are gone to Rome, and find the whole city 'to be hired.' Family men in general are not likely to go there this winter, and we shall find the

coast very clear. And *you* — dearest friend, you seem to have given up Italy altogether this winter. Unless you come to Rome, we shall not be the better for your crossing the Alps. The Eckleys have settled in Florence till next year. The Perkinses also. Isa Blagden is at her villa, which, if she lets, she may pay Miss Cushman a visit in Rome towards the spring, but scarcely earlier.

After the dreary track of physical discomfort was passed, I enjoyed Siena much, and so did Robert, and the next time we have to spend a summer in Tuscany we shall certainly turn our faces that way. When able to drive, I drove about with Robert and enjoyed the lovely country; and once, on the last day, I ventured into the gallery and saw the divine Eve of Sodoma for the second time. But I never entered the cathedral — think of that! There were steps to be mounted. But I have the vision of it safe within me since nine years ago. The Storys, let me remember to tell you gratefully, were very kind and very delicate, offering all kindnesses I could receive, and no other. . . .

Did I tell you that Jessie Mario had written to me from Romagna? You know, in any case, that she and her husband were arrested subsequently and sent into Switzerland. The other day I had two printed letters from the newspaper 'Evening Star,' enclosed to me by herself or her brother, I suppose — one the production of her husband, and one of Brofferio the advocate. I thought both were written in a detestable spirit, attempting to throw an odium on the governments of Central Italy, which they should all three have rather died in their own poor personal reputations than have wished to hazard under present circumstances. Mazzini and his party have only to keep still, if *indeed* they do *not* desire to swamp the great Italian cause. Every movement made by them is a gain to Austria — a clear gain. Every word spoken by them, even if it applaud us, goes against the cause! Whoever has a conscience among them, let him consider this and be still. . . .

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Casa Guidi: November 2 [1859].

My dearest Fanny, — I this moment receive your letter, and hasten to answer it lest I should be too late for you in Paris. Dear Fanny, you seem in a chronic transitional state; it's always *crisis* with you. I can't *advise;* but I do rather *wonder* that you don't go at once to England and see your friends till you can do your business. . . . You can get at pictures in England and at artistic society also if you please; and making a *slancio* into Germany or to Paris would not be impossible to you occasionally.

Does this advice sound *too* disinterested on my part? Never think so. We only stand ourselves on one foot in Florence — forced to go away in the summer; forced to go away in the winter. Robert was so persuaded even last winter (before my illness) of my being better at Rome that he would have taken an apartment there and furnished it, except that I prevented him. Then we have calls from the north, and on most summers we must be in England and Paris. To stay on through the summer in Florence is impossible to us at least. Think of thermometers being a hundred and two in the shade this year! So I consider your case dispassionately, and conclude *we* are not worth your consideration in reference to prospects connected with any place. We are rolling stones gathering no moss. There's no use for anyone to run after us; but we may roll anyone's way. I say this, penetrated by your affectionate feeling for us. May God bless you and keep you, my dear friend.

As for me, I have been nearly as ill as possible — that's the truth — suffering so much that the idea of the evil's recurrence makes me feel nervous. All the Italians who came near me gave me up as a lost life; but God would not have it so this time, and my old vitality proved itself

strong still. At present I am remarkably well; I had a return of threatening symptoms a fortnight ago, but they passed. I think I had been talking too much. Now I feel quite as free and well as usual about the chest, and 'buoyant' as to general spirits. Affairs in Italy seem going well, and Napoleon does not forget us, whatever his townsfolk of a certain class may do. The French newspapers remember us well, I am happy to see, also. But, my dear Fanny, who am I to give letters to Garibaldi? I don't know him, nor does he know *me*. Have you acquaintance with Madame Swartz? *She* could help Mr. Spicer. But she has just gone to Rome. And *we* are going to Rome. Did not Sarianna tell you that? We go on my account to avoid the tramontana here. People say we are foolhardy on account of the state of the country; but you are aware we are no more frightened of revolutions than M. Charles is of the tiger. Prices at Rome will be more reasonable at any rate. Nobody pays high for a probability of being massacred. What I'm most afraid of after all is lest the 'Holiness of our Lord' should agree to reform at the last moment. It's too late; it must be too late — it ought to be too late. . . .

Poor Mr. Landor is in perfect health and in rather good spirits, seeming reconciled to his fate of exile. In the summer he moaned over it sadly, 'never could be happy except in England;' and I rather leant to sending him back, I confess. But Mr. Forster and other friends seemed to think that if he went back he could never be kept from the attack, all would come over again; and really that was probable. Still, I feared for him before he went to Siena. It does not do to shake hour-glasses at his age, and though he had been acclimated here by an eleven years' residence, still — well; there was nothing for it but to keep him here. He sighs a little still that it 'does not agree with him,' and that Florence is a 'very ugly town,' and so on; but still he is evidently much stronger than when he went to Siena, can walk for an hour together (instead of failing at the end of

the street), and looks quite vigorous with his snow-white beard and moustache, through which the carnivorous laugh runs and rings. He doesn't know yet we are going away. He will miss Robert dreadfully. Robert's goodness to him has really been apostolical. And think of the effect of a goodness which can quote at every turn of a phrase something from an author's book! Isn't it more bewitching than other goodnesses? To certain authors, that is. . . .

Dearest Fanny, keep up your spirits, *do*. Write to me to say you are less sad. And love not less your

Affectionate

Ba.

To Mr. Chorley

Casa Guidi: November 25 [1859].

My dear Friend, — I thank you with all my heart for your most graceful and touching dedication,[1] and do assure you that I feel it both as honour and as pleasure.

And yet, do you know, Robert says that you might peradventure, by the dedication of your book to me, mean a covert lecture, or sarcasm, who knows? Even if you did, the kindness of the personal address would make up for it. Who wouldn't bear both lecture and sarcasm from anyone who begins by speaking *so?* Therefore I am honoured and pleased and grateful all the same — yes, and *will* be.

But, dear Mr. Chorley, you don't silence me, notwithstanding. The spell of your dedication hasn't fastened me up in an oak for ever. Your book is very clever; your characters very incisively given; princess and patriots admirably cut out (and up!); half truths everywhere, to which one says 'How true!' But one might as well (and better) say 'How false!' seeing that, dear Mr. Chorley, it does really take two halves to make a whole, and we know

[1] Mr. Chorley had dedicated his last novel, *Roccabella*, to Mrs. Browning.

it. The whole truth is not here — not even suggested here — and let me add that the half truth on this occasion is cruel.

One thing is ignored in the book. Under all the ridiculousness, under all the wickedness even of such men and women, lies *a cause*, a right inherent, a wrong committed. The cant presupposes a doctrine, and the pretension a real heroism. Your best people (in your book) seem to have no notion of this. Your heroine deserves to be a victim, not because she was rash and ignorant, but because she was selfish and foolish. The world wasn't lost for her because she loved — either a cause or a man — but because she wanted change and excitement. If she had felt on the abstract question as I have known women to feel, even when they have acted like fools, I should pity her more. As it is, the lesson was necessary. If she had not married rashly an Italian *birbante* she would have married rashly an English blackguard, and I myself see small difference in the kinds. With *you*, however, to your mind, it is different; and in this view of yours seems to me to lie the main fault of your book. You evidently think that God made only the English. The English are a peculiar people. Their worst is better than the best of the exterior nations. Over the rest of the world He has cast out His shoe. Even supposing that a foreigner does, by extraordinary exception, some good thing, it's only in reaction from having murdered somebody last year, or at least left his children to starve the year before. Truth, generosity, nobleness of will and mind, these things do not exist beyond the influence of the 'Times' newspaper and the 'Saturday Review.' (By the way, it would be extraordinary if it *were so*.)

Well, I have lived thirteen years on the Continent, and, far as England is from Italy, far as the heavens are from the earth, I dissent from you, dissent from you, dissent from you.

I say so, and there is an end. It is relief to me, and will

make no impression on you; but for my sake you permit me to say it, I feel sure.

Dear Mr. Chorley, Robert and I have had true pleasure (in spite of all this fault-finding) in feeling ourselves close to you in your book. Volume after volume we have exchanged, talking of you, praising you here, blaming you there, but always feeling pleasure in reading your words and speaking your name. Don't say it's the last novel. You, who can do so much. Write us another at once rather, doing justice to our sublime Azeglios and acute Cavours and energetic Farinis. If I could hear an English statesman (Conservative or Liberal) speak out of a large heart and generous comprehension as I did Azeglio this last spring, I should thank God for it. I fear I never shall. My boy may, perhaps. Red tape has garrotted this political generation. . . .

I persist in being in high hopes for my Italy.

Ever affectionately yours

ELIZABETH B. BROWNING.

Early in December the move to Rome took place, and they found rooms at 28 Via del Tritone. During the winter Mrs. Browning was preparing for the press her last volume, the 'Poems before Congress,' while her husband, in a fit of disinclination to write poetry, occupied himself by trying his hand at sculpture.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: December 1859.]

Dearest Sarianna, — Robert will have told you of the success of our journey, which the necessities of Mr. Landor very nearly pushed back into the cold too late. We had even resolved that if the wind changed before morning we would accept it 'as a sign' and altogether give up Rome. We were all but run to ground, you see. Happily it didn't

end so; and here we are in a very nice sunny apartment, which would have been far beyond our means last year or any year except just now when the Pope's obstinacy and the rumoured departure of the French have left Rome a solitude and called it peace — very problematical peace. (Peni, in despair at leaving Florence, urged on us that 'for mama to have cold air in her chest would be better than to have a cannon-ball in her stomach;' but she was unreasonably more afraid of one than of the other.) Apartments here for which friends of ours paid forty pounds English the month last winter are going for fifteen or under — or rather not going — for nobody scarcely comes to take them. The Pope's 'reforms' seem to be limited, in spite of his alarming position, which is breaking his heart, he told a friend of Mrs. Stowe's the other day, and out of which he looks to be relieved only by some special miracle (the American was quite affected to hear the old man bewail himself!), to an edict against crinolines, the same being forbidden to sweep the sacred pavement of St. Peter's. This is *true*, though it sounds like a joke.

Even Florence has very few English. A crisis is looked for everywhere. Prices there are rising fast; but one is prepared to pay more for liberty. Carriages are dearer than in Paris by our new tariff, which is an item important to me. We left Mr. Landor in great comfort. I went to see his apartment before it was furnished. Rooms small, but with a look out into a little garden; quiet and cheerful; and he doesn't mind a situation rather out of the way. He pays four pound ten (English) the month. Wilson has *thirty* pounds a year for taking care of him, which sounds a good deal; but it *is* a difficult position. He has excellent, generous, affectionate impulses, but the impulses of the tiger every now and then. Nothing coheres in him, either in his opinions, or I fear, affections. It isn't age; he is precisely the man of his youth, I must believe. Still, his genius gives him the right of gratitude on all artists at least, and I must

say that my Robert has generously paid the debt. Robert always said that he owed more as a writer to Landor than to any contemporary. At present Landor is very fond of him; but I am quite prepared for his turning against us as he has turned against Forster, who has been so devoted for years and years. Only one isn't kind for what one gets by it, or there wouldn't be much kindness in this world.

I keep well; and of course, at Rome there is more chance for me than there was in Florence; but I hated to inflict an unpopular journey, of which the advantage was solely mine. Poor Peni said that if he had to leave his Florence he would rather go to Paris than to Rome. I dare say he would. Then his Florentines frightened him with ideas of the awful massacre we were to be subjected to here. The pony travelled like a glorified Houynhmn and we have brought a second male servant to take care of him. It was an economy; for the wages of Rome are inordinate. Pen's tender love to his nonno and you with that of

Your ever affectionate sister,

BA.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome:] 28 Via Tritone: Friday [winter 1859].

My dearest Fanny, — Set me down as a wretch, but hear me. I have been ill again, in the first place; then as weak as a rag in consequence, and then with business accumulated on impotent hands; proofs to see to, and the like. You may have heard in the buzz of newspapers of certain presentation *swords*, subscribed for by twenty thousand Romans, at a franc each, and presented in homage and gratitude to Napoleon III. and Victor Emmanuel. Castellani[1]

[1] 'Do you see this ring?
'Tis Rome-work, made to match
(By *Castellani's* imitative craft)
Etrurian circlets,' etc.
(*The Ring and the Book*, i. 1–4.)

of course was the artist, and the whole business had to be huddled up at the end, because of his Holiness denouncing all such givers of gifts as traitors to the See. So just as the swords had to be packed up and disappear, some one came with a shut carriage to take me for a sight of these most exquisite works of art. It was five o'clock in the evening and raining, but not cold, so that the whole world here agreed it couldn't hurt me. I went with Robert therefore; we were received at Castellani's most flatteringly as poets and lovers of Italy; were asked for autographs; and returned in a blaze of glory and satisfaction, to collapse (as far as I'm concerned) in a near approach to mortality. You see I can't catch a simple cold. All my bad symptoms came back. Suffocations, singular heart-action, cough tearing one to atoms. A gigantic blister, however, let me crawl out of bed at the end of a week, and the advantage of a Roman climate *told*, I dare say, for the attack was less violent and much less long than the one in the summer. Only I feel myself brittle, and become aware of increased susceptibility. Dr. Gresonowsky warns me against Florence in the winter. I must be warm, they say. Well, never mind! Now I am well again, and I don't know why I should have whined so to you. I am well, and living on asses' milk by way of sustaining the mental calibre; yes, and able to have *tête-à-têtes* with Theodore Parker, who believes nothing, you know, and has been writing a little Christmas book for the young just now, to prove how they should keep Christmas without a Christ, and a Mr. Hazard, a spiritualist, who believes everything, walks and talks with spirits, and impresses Robert with a sense of veracity, which is more remarkable. I like the man much. He holds the subject on high grounds, takes the idea and lives on it above the earth. For years he has given himself to investigation, and has seen the Impossible. Certainly enough Robert met him and conversed with him, and came back to tell me what an intelligent and agreeable new American

acquaintance he had made, without knowing that he was Hazard the spiritualist, rather famous in his department. . . . Don't fall out of heart with investigation. It takes patient investigation to establish the number of legs of a newly remarked fly. Nothing *riles* me so much as the dogmatism of the people who pronounce on there being nothing to see, because in half a dozen experiments, perhaps, they have seen nothing conclusive.

> 'Yet could not all creation pierce
> Beyond the bottom of his eye.'

Mediums cheat certainly. So do people who are not mediums. I congratulate you on liking anybody better. That's pleasant for *you* at any rate. My changes are always the other way. I begin by seeing the beautiful in most people, and then comes the disillusion. It isn't caprice or unsteadiness; oh no! it's merely *fate*. *My* fate, I mean. Alas, my bubbles, my bubbles!

But I'm growing too original, and will break off. My Emperor at least, has not deceived me, and I'm going into the fire for him with a little 'brochure' of political poems, which you shall take at Chapman's with the last edition of 'Aurora' when you go to England. Thank you a hundred times from both Robert and me for the interesting relation of Cobden's sayings on him. If Cobden had not rushed beyond civilisation, I should like to offer him my little book. I should like it. Self-love is the great malady of England, and immortal would the statesman be who could and would tear a wider horizon for the popular mind. As to the rifle-cry, *I* never doubted (for one) that it had its beginning with 'interested persons.' Never was any cry more ignoble. A rescues B from being murdered by C, and E cries out, 'What if *A* should murder *me!*' That's the logic of the subject. And the sentiment is worthy of the logic.

I expect to be torn to pieces by English critics for what I have ventured to write. . . .

Write me one of your amusing letters, and take our love, especially

Your ever affectionate Ba's.

There is no Roman news, people are so scarce. The Storys have given a ball, Italians chiefly. We think of little but politics.

To Mrs. Martin

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: December 29 [1859].

It was pleasant to have news of you, dearest friends, and to know of your being comfortably established at Pau this cold winter, as it seems to be in the north. We came here, flying from the Florence tramontana, at the very close of November, on the Perugia road, after having been weather-bound at Casa Guidi till we almost gave up our Roman plan. Most happily the cold spared us during our six days' journey, which was very pleasant. I like travelling by vetturino. The fatigue is small, and if you take a supply of books with you the time does not hang fire. We had some old Balzacs, which came new (he is one of our gods — heathen, you will say) and we had, besides, Charles Reade's 'Love me Little, Love me Long,' which is full of ability. Then Peni had his pony as a source of interest. The pony was fastened to the vettura horses, and came into Rome, not merely fresh, but fat. And we have fallen into pleasant places by way of lodgings here, our friends having prepared a list to choose from, so that I had only to drop out of the hotel into bright sunny rooms, which do not cost too much on account of the comparative desertion of this holy city this year. We arrived on December 3, and here it is nearly January 1 — almost a month. The older one grows the faster time passes. Do you observe that?

You catch the wind of the wheels in your face, it seems, as you get nearer the end. I observe it strongly.

Let me say of myself first that I am particularly well, and feel much more sure and steady than since my illness. How are you both? I do hope and trust you can give me good news of yourselves. Do you read aloud to one another or each alone? Robert and I do the last always. May God bless you both in health of body and soul, and every source of happiness for the coming and other years. I wish and pray it out of my heart. . . .

And you are studying music? I honour you for it. Do tell me, dearest Mrs. Martin, did you know nothing of music before, and have you taken up the piano? I hold a peculiar heresy as to the use hereafter of what we learn here. When there is no longer any growth in me, I desire to die — for one. And at present I by no means desire to die.

So you and others upbraid me with having put myself out of my 'natural place.' What *is* one's natural place, I wonder? For the Chinese it is the inner side of the wall. For the red man it is the forest. The natural place of everybody, I believe, is within the crust of all manner of prejudices, social, religious, literary. That is as men conceive of 'natural places.' But, in the highest sense, I ask you, how *can* a man or a woman leave his or her natural place. Wherever God's universe is round, and God's law above, there is a natural place. Circumstances, the force of natural things, have brought me here and kept me; it is my natural place. And, intellectually speaking, having grown to a certain point by help of certain opportunities, my way of regarding the world is also natural to me, my opinions are the natural deductions of my mind. Isn't it so? Still I do beg to say both to you and to others accusing that Italy is not my 'adopted country.' I love Italy, but I love France, too, and certainly I love England. Because I have broken through what seems to me the English 'Little Pedlingtonism,' am I to be supposed to take up an Italian

'Little Pedlingtonism?' No, indeed. I love truth and justice, or I try to love truth and justice, more than any Plato's or Shakespeare's country.[1] I certainly do not love the egotism of England, nor wish to love it. I class England among the most immoral nations in respect to her foreign politics. And her 'National Defence' cry fills me with disgust. But this by no means proves that I have adopted another country — no, indeed! In fact, patriotism in the narrow sense is a virtue which will wear out, sooner or later, everywhere. Jew and Greek must drop their antagonisms; and if Christianity is ever to develop it will not respect frontiers.

As to Italy, though I nearly broke my heart over her last summer, and love the Italians deeply, I should feel passionately any similar crisis anywhere. You cannot judge the people or the question out of the 'Times' newspaper, whose sole policy is, it seems to me, to get up a war between France and England, though the world should perish in the struggle. The amount of fierce untruth uttered in that paper, and sworn to by the 'Saturday Review,' makes the moral sense curdle within one. You do not *know* this as we do, and you therefore set it down as matter of Continental prejudice on my part. Well, time will prove. As to Italy, I have to put on the rein to prevent myself from hoping into the Ideal again. I am on my guard against another fall from that chariot of the sun. But things look magnificently, and if I could tell you certain facts (which I can't) you would admit it. Odo Russell, the English Minister here (in an occult sense) who, with a very acute mind, is strongly Russell and English, and was full of the English distrust of L.N. when with us at Siena last September, came to me two days ago and said, 'It is plain now. The Emperor is rather Italian than French. He has worked, and is working, only for Italy; and whatever has seemed

[1] Mrs. Browning is here quoting from her own preface to *Poems before Congress.*

otherwise has been forced from him in order to keep on terms with his colleagues, the kings and queens of Europe. Everything that comes out proves it more and more.' In fact, he has risked everything for the Italians except *their cause*. I am delighted, among other things, at Cavour's representation of Italy at the Congress. Antonelli and his party are in desperation, gnashing their teeth at the Tuileries. The position of the Emperor is most difficult, but his great brain will master it. We are rather uneasy about the English Ministry — its work in Congress; it might go out for me (falling to pieces on the pitiful Suez question or otherwise), but we do want it at Congress.

To Mrs. Jameson

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: February 22 [1860].

Dearest, naughtiest Mona Nina, — Where is the place of your soul, your body abiding at Brighton, that never, no, never, do I hear from you? It seems hard. Last summer I was near to slipping out of the world, and then, except for a rap, you might have called on me in vain (and said rap you wouldn't have believed in). Also, even this winter, even in this Rome, the city of refuge, I have had an attack, less long and sharp, indeed, but weakening, and, though I am well now, and have corrected the proofs of a very thin and wicked 'brochure' on Italian affairs (in verse, of course), yet still I am not too strong for cod-liver oil and the affectionateness of such friends as you (I speak as if I had a shoal of such friends — povera me!). Write to me, therefore. Especially as the English critics will worry me alive for my book and you will have to say, 'Well done, critics!' so write before you read it, to say, 'Ba, I love you.' That makes up for everything. Oh, I know you did write to me in the summer. And then I wrote to you; and then there came a *pause*, which is hard on me, I repeat.

Geddie has come here, lamenting also. Besides, we

have been somewhat disappointed by your not coming to Italy. Never will you come to Rome as Geddie expects, late in the spring, to take an apartment close to her, looking charmingly on the river. I told her quite frankly that you would not be so unwise. Rome is empty of foreigners this year, a few Americans standing for all. Then, in the midst of the quiet, deeply does the passion work: on one side, with the people, on the other in the despair and rage of the Papal Government. The Pope can't go out to breakfast, to drink chocolate and talk about 'Divine things' to the 'Christian youth,' but he stumbles upon the term 'new ideas,' and, falling precipitately into a fury, neither evangelical nor angelical, calls Napoleon a *sicario* (cut-throat), and Vittorio Emanuele an *assassino.* The French head of police, who was present, whispered to acquaintances of ours, 'Comme il enrage le saint père.' In fact, all dignity has been repeatedly forgotten in simple *rage.* Affairs of Italy generally are going on to the goal, and we look for the best and glorious results, perhaps *not without more fighting.* Certainly we can't leave Venetia in the mouth of Austria by a second Villafranca. We cannot and will not. And, sooner or later, the Emperor is prepared, I think, to carry us through. Odo Russell told me (without my putting any question to him) that everything, as it came out, proved how true he had been to Italy — that, in fact, he had 'rather acted as an Italian than as a Frenchman.' And Mr. Russell, while liberal, is himself very English, and free from Buonaparte tendencies from hair to heel.

We often have letters from dear Isa Blagden, who sends me the Florence news, more shining from day to day. Central Italy seems safe.

But let me tell you of my thin slice of a wicked book. Yes, I shall expect you to read it, and I send you an order for it to Chapman, therefore. Everybody will hate me for it, and so *you must* try hard to love me the more to make up for that. Say it's mad, and bad, and sad; but *add* that

somebody did it who meant it, thought it, felt it, throbbed it out with heart and brain, and that she holds it for truth in conscience and not in partisanship. I want to tell you (oh, I can't help telling you) that when the ode was read before Peni, at the part relating to Italy his eyes overflowed, and down he threw himself on the sofa, hiding his face. The child has been very earnest about Italian politics. The heroine of that poem called 'The Dance'[1] was Madame di Laiatico. The 'Court Lady' is an individualisation of a general fashion, the ladies at Milan having gone to the hospitals in full dress and in open carriages. Macmahon taking up the child[2] is also historical. I believe the facts to be in the book: 'He has done it all,'[3] were Cavour's words. When you see an advertisement and have an opportunity to apply at Chapman's, do so 'by this sign' enclosed. I read of you in the papers, stirring up the women.

Write and say how you are, and where you are.

[*Part of this letter is missing.*]

Your ever very affectionate

BA.

I hope you liked the article on the immorality of luncheon-rooms in your high-minded 'Saturday Review.'

[1] *Poetical Works*, iv. 190.

[2] See 'Napoleon III. in Italy,' stanza 11, *ibid.* p. 181. The incident occurred at Macmahon's entry into Milan, three days after Magenta.

[3] *Ibid.* stanza 12.

CHAPTER XI

1860–1861

EARLY in 1860 the promised booklet, 'Poems before Congress,' was published in England, and met with very much the reception the authoress had anticipated. It contained only eight poems, all but one relating to the Italian question. Published at a time when the events to which they alluded were still matters of current controversy, they could not but be regarded rather as pamphleteering than as poetry; and it could hardly be expected that the ordinary Englishman, whose sympathy with Italy did not abolish his mistrust (eminently justifiable, as later revelations have shown it to be) of Louis Napoleon, should read with equanimity the continual scorn of English policy and motives, or the continual exaltation of the Emperor. Looking back now over a distance of nearly forty years, and when the Second Empire, with all its merits and its sins, has long gone to its account, we can, at least in part, put aside the politics and enjoy the poetry. Though pieces like 'The Dance' and 'A Court Lady' are not of much permanent value, there are many fine passages, notably in 'Napoleon III. in Italy,' and 'Italy and the World,' in which a true and noble enthusiasm is expressed in living and burning words, worthy of a poet.

For attacks on her Italian politics Mrs. Browning was prepared, as the foregoing letters show; but one incident caused her real and quite unexpected annoyance. The

reviewer in the 'Athenæum' (apparently Mr. Chorley) by some unaccountable oversight took the 'Curse for a Nation' to apply to England, instead of being (as it obviously is) a denunciation of American slavery. Consequently he referred to this poem in terms of strong censure, as improper and unpatriotic on the part of an English writer; and a protest from Mrs. Browning only elicited a somewhat grudging editorial note, in a tone which implied that the interpretation which the reviewer had put upon the poem was one which it would naturally bear. One can hardly be surprised at the annoyance which this treatment caused to Mrs. Browning, though some of the phrases in which she speaks of it bear signs of the excitement which characterised so much of her thought in these years of mental strain and stress, and bodily weakness and decay.

To Mrs. Jameson

(Fragment) [Early in 1860.]

I remember well your kindness to it. Nothing was said then about the 'fit arguments for poetry,' and I recovered from it to write 'Aurora Leigh,' of which, however, many people did say that it was built on an unfit argument, and besides was a very indecent, corrupting book (have I not heard of ladies of sixty, who had 'never felt themselves pure since reading it'?) But now, consider. Since you did not lose hope for me in 'Casa Guidi Windows,' because the line of politics was your own, why need you despair of me in the 'Poems before Congress,' although I do praise the Devil in them? A mistake is not fatal to a critic? need it be to a poet? Does Napoleon's being wicked (if he is so) make Italy less interesting? or unfit for poetry, historical subjects like 'The Dance' or the 'Court Lady?'

Meanwhile that thin-skinned people the Americans exceed some of you in generosity, rendering thanks to reprovers of their ill-deeds, and understanding the pure love

of the motive.[1] Let me tell you rather for their sake than mine. I have extravagant praises and *prices* offered to me from 'over the western sun,' in consequence of these very 'Poems before Congress.' The nation is generous in these things and not 'thin-skinned.'

As to England, I shall be forgiven in time. The first part of a campaign and the first part of a discussion are the least favourable to English successes. After a while (by the time you have learnt to shoot cats with the new rifles), you will put them away, and arrive at the happy second thought which corrects the first thought. That second thought will not be of *invasion*, prophesies a headless prophet. 'Time was when heads were off a man would die.' A man — yes. But a woman! *We* die hard, you know.

Here, an end. I hope you will write to me some day, and ease me by proving to me that I have ceased to be bitter to the palate of your soul. Believe this — that, rather than be a serious sadness to you, I would gladly sit on in the pillory under the aggressive mud of that mob of 'Saturday Reviewers,' who take their mud and their morals from the same place, and use voices hoarse with hooting down un-English poetesses, to cheer on the English champion, Tom Sayers. For me, I neither wish for the 'belt'[2] nor martyrdom; but if I were ambitious of anything, it might be to be wronged where, for instance, Cavour is wronged.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome,] Friday [end of March 1860].

My ever dearest Isa, — I am scarcely in heart yet for writing letters, and did not mean to write to-day. You heard of the unexpected event which brought me the loss of a very dear friend, dear, dear Mrs. Jameson.[3] It was,

[1] This refers to the 'Curse for a Nation.'

[2] See note on p. 387.

[3] Mrs. Jameson died on March 17, 1860.

of course, a shock to me, as such things are meant to be. . . .

And now I come to what makes me tax you with a dull letter, I feeling so dully; and, dear, it is with dismay I have to tell you that the letter you addressed under cover to Mr. Russell has *never reached us*. Till your last communication (this moment received), I had hoped that the contents of it might have been less important than O.-papers must be. What is to be done, or thought? I beseech you to write and tell me if *harm* is likely to follow from this seizure. The other inclosure came to me quite safely, because it came by the Government messenger. I think you sent it through Corbet. But Mr. Russell's *post* letters are as liable to opening as mine are; his name is no security. Whenever you send a 'Nazione' newspaper through him, it never reaches us, though we receive our 'Monitore' through him regularly. Why? Because in his position he is allowed to have newspapers for his own use. He takes in for himself no 'Monitore,' so ours goes to his account, but he does take in a 'Nazione,' therefore ours is seized, as being plainly for other hands than his own licensed ones.

I am very much grieved about this loss of your letter and its contents. First, there's my fear lest harm should come of this, and then there's my own personal *mulcting* of what would have been of such deep interest to me. I am 'revelling'? See how little.

Robert wrote in a playful vein to Kate, and you must not and will not care for that. He had understood from your letter that you and the majority had all, like the 'Athenæum,' understood the 'Curse for a Nation' to be directed against England. Robert was *furious* about the 'Athenæum;' no other word describes him, and I thought that both I and Mr. Chorley would perish together, seeing that even the accusation (such a one!) made me infamous, it seemed.

The curious thing is, that it was at Robert's suggestion

that that particular poem was reprinted there (it never had appeared in England), though 'Barkis was willing;' I had no manner of objection. I never have to justice.

Mr. Chorley's review is objectionable to me because unjust. A reviewer should read the book he gives judgment on, and he could not have read from beginning to end the particular poem in question, and have expounded its significance so. I wrote a letter on the subject to the 'Athenæum' to correct this mis-statement, which I cared for chiefly on Robert's account.

In fact, *I* cursed neither England nor America. I leave such things to our Holy Father here; the poem only pointed out how the curse was involved in the action of slave-holding.

I never saw Robert so enraged about a criticism. He is better now, let me add.

In the matter of Savoy,[1] it has vexed and vexes me, I do confess to you. It's a handle given to various kinds of dirty hands, it spoils the beauty and glory of much, the uncontested admiration of which would have done good to the world. At the same time, as long as Piedmont and Savoy agree in the annexation to France, there is nothing to object to — not to object to with a reasonable mind. And it seems to be understood (it is stated in fact), that the cession is under condition of the assent of the populations. The Vote is necessary to the honour of France. I do not doubt that it will be consulted. Meantime there is too much haste, I think. There is a haste somewhat indelicate in the introduction of French garrisons into Savoy, previous to the popular conclusion being known. There should have been mixed garrisons, French and Piedmontese, till the vote was taken. Napoleon should have been more particular in Savoy than he was even in Central Italy, as to

[1] The surrender to France of Savoy and Nice, which, though propounded by Napoleon to Cavour before the war, was only definitely demanded at the end of February 1860.

the advance of any occasion of the current charge of 'pressure.'

Altogether the subject is an anxious one — would be, even if less rancorous violence on the part of his enemies were wreaked upon it. The English Tories are using it with the frenzy of despair, and no wonder!

Lamoricière's arrival is another proof of the internal coalition against the Empire.

Now I must end, Robert says, or I shall lose the post. My true best love, and Robert's — and Peni's.

Write to me, do, dearest Isa, and tell me if the MSS. sent were *nuisibles*. The Excommunication just out is said to include the Emperor.

Your ever loving

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Rome: about March 1860.]

Dearest Sarianna, — It is impossible to have a regret for dear Lady Elgin. She has been imprisoned here under double chains too long. To be out of the dark and the restraint is a blessing to that spirit, and must be felt so by all who love her. Of course I shall write to Lady Augusta Bruce. . . .

No, I don't think there is much to be forgiven by my countrymen in my book. What I reproach them for, none of them deny. They certainly took no part in the war, nor will they if there is more war, and certainly the existence of the rifle clubs is a fact.

Robert and I began to write on the Italian question together, and our plan was (Robert's own suggestion!) to publish jointly. When I showed him my ode on Napoleon he observed that I was gentle to England in comparison to what he had been, but after Villafranca (the Palmerston Ministry having come in) he destroyed his poem and left me alone, and I determined to stand alone. What Robert

had written no longer suited the moment; but the poetical devil in me burnt on for an utterance. I have spoken nothing but historical truths, as far as the outline is concerned. But the spirit of the whole, is, of course, opposed to the national feeling, or I should not in my preface suppose it to be offended.

With every deference to you, dearest Sarianna, I cannot think that you who live, as the English usually do, quite aside and apart from French society, can judge of the interest in France for Italy. I see French letters — letters of French men and women — giving a very contrary impression. The French newspapers give a very contrary impression. And the statistics of books and pamphlets published and circulated in France on the Italian question this year are in most prodigious disaccord with such a conclusion. Compare them with the same statistics in England, and then judge.

Besides the English, to do them justice, can be active and generous in any cause in which they are really interested, and it is a fact that we could not get up a subscription in England even for Garibaldi's muskets lately, while France is always giving.

Not that there are not, and have not been, many English of generous sympathies towards Italy. That I well know. But it is a small, protesting minority. Lord John has done very well, as far as words can go, but it has been simply in giving effect to the intentions of France, who wanted much a respectable conservative Power like England to endorse her bill of revolution with the retrograde European Governments.

I will spare what I think of the treatment in England of the Savoy question. We are losing all moral prestige in the eyes of the world, with our small jealousies and factional struggles for power.

Ah! dear Sarianna, I don't complain for myself of an unappreciating public — *I have no reason*. But, just for *that*

reason, I complain more about Robert, only he does not hear me complain. To *you* I may say, that the blindness, deafness, and stupidity of the English public to Robert are amazing. Of course Milsand had 'heard his name'! Well, the contrary would have been strange. Robert *is*. All England can't prevent his existence, I suppose. But nobody there, except a small knot of pre-Raffaelite men, pretends to do him justice. Mr. Forster has done the best in the press. As a sort of lion, Robert has his range in society, and, for the rest, you should see Chapman's returns; while in America he's a power, a writer, a poet. He is read — he lives in the hearts of the people. 'Browning readings' here in Boston; 'Browning evenings' there. For the rest, the English hunt lions too, Sarianna, but their favourite lions are chosen among 'lords' chiefly, or 'railroad kings.' 'It's worth *eating much dirt*,' said an Englishman of high family and character here, 'to get to Lady ——'s soirée.' Americans will eat dirt to get to *us*. There's the difference. English people will come and stare at *me* sometimes, but physicians, dentists, who serve me and refuse their fees, artists who give me pictures, friends who give up their carriages and make other practical sacrifices, are *not English* — no — though English Woolner was generous about a bust. Let *me* be just at least.

There is a beautiful photograph of Wilde's picture of Pen on horseback, which shall go to you, the likeness better than in the picture.

I can scarcely allude to the loss of my loved friend Mrs. Jameson. It's a blot more on the world to me. Best love to you and the dear Nonno from Pen and myself. The editor of the 'Atlas' writes to thank me for the justice and courage of my international politics. English clergyman stops at the door to say to the servant, 'He does not know me, but applauds my sentiments.' So there may be ten just persons who spare

Your affectionate sister.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome]: Saturday [April 1860].

My dearest dear Isa, not well! That must be the first word 'by return of post.' Dear, let me have a better letter, to say that you are well and bright again, and brilliant Isa as customary.

And now, join me in admiration of the 'husband Browning!' Isn't he a miracle, whoever else may be? The wife Browning, not to name most other human beings, would have certainly put the 'Monitore' receipt into the fire, or, at best, lost it. In fact, whisper it not in the streets of Askelon, but *she* had forgotten even the fact of its having been sent, and was quietly concluding that Wilson had lost it in a fog and that we should have patiently to pay twice. Not at all. Up rises the husband Browning, superior to his mate, and with eyes all fire, holds up the receipt like an heroic rifleman looking to a French invasion at the end of a hundred years. Blessed be they who keep receipts. It is a beatitude beyond my reach.

Only I do hope my Tuscan friends of the 'Monitore' are only careless and forgetful in their business habits, and that they didn't think of 'annexing'—eh, Isa! No, I don't believe it was dishonesty, it might have so very well been oblivion.

May the paper come to-day, that's all. We get the 'Galignani,' but can't afford to miss our Italian news. Then, not only we ourselves, but half a dozen Tuscan exiles here in Rome who are not allowed to read a freely breathed word, come to us for that paper, friends of Ferdinando's living in Rome. First he lent them the paper, then they got frightened for fear of being convicted through some spy of reading such a thing,[1] and prayed to come to this house to read it. There have been six of them sometimes in the

[1] Rome, it will be remembered, was still under Papal government.

evening. We keep a sort of café in Rome, observe, and your 'Monitore' is necessary to us.

You have seen by this time Lamoricière's[1] address to the Papal army. It's extraordinary, while the French are still here, that such a publication should be permitted, obvious as the position taken must be to all, and personally displeasing to the Emperor as the man is known to be. Magnanimity is certainly a great feature of Napoleon's mind. And now what next? The French are going, of course. You would suppose an attack on Romagna imminent. And better so. Let us have it out at once.

I have the papers. I am much the better for some things in them. There's to be the universal suffrage, the withdrawal of troops, whatever I wanted. Cavour's dispatch to the Swiss is also excellent. Those injured martyrs wanted the bone in their teeth, that's all.

The wailing in England for Swiss and Savoyards, while other nationalities are to be trodden under foot without intervention, except what's called *aggression*, is highly irritating to me.

Dearest Isa, Robert tore me from my last sentence to you. I was going to say that I cared less for the attacks of the press on my book than I care for your sympathy. Thank you for feeling 'mad' for me. But be sane again. Dear, it's not worth being mad for.

In the advertised 'Blackwood,' do you see an article called 'Poetic Aberration?' It came into my head that it might be a stone thrown at me, and Robert went to Monaldini's to glance at it. Sure enough it is a stone. He says a violent attack. And let me do him justice. It was only the misstatement in the 'Athenæum' which overset him, only the first fire which made him wink. Now he turns a hero's face to all this cannonading. He doesn't care a straw, he says, and what's more, he doesn't, really. So I, who was

[1] The French general appointed by the Pope in April, 1860, to command the Papal army.

only sorry for him, can't care. Observe, Isa, if there had been less violence and more generosity, the poems would obviously have been less deserved.

The English were not always so thin-skinned. Lord Byron and Moore have. . . .

[*The rest of the letter is lost.*]

To Miss I. Blagden

Rome : April 2, [1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — Here are the letters ! I am sorry I wrote rashly yesterday ; but from an expression of yours I took for granted that the packet went by the post ; and I have been really very anxious about it.

No, Isa ; I don't like the tone of these letters so well. I can understand that what is said of Belgium and the Rhine provinces is in the event of a certain coalition and eventual complication, but it doesn't do, even in a thought and theory, to sacrifice a country like Belgium. I respect France, and 'l'idée Napoléonne ;' yes, but conscience and the populations more.

As to Napoleon's waiting for the bribe of Savoy before he would pass beyond Villafranca, this is making him ignoble ; and I do not believe it in the least. Also it contradicts the letter-writer's previous letter, in which he said that Savoy had been from the beginning the *sous entendre* of Venetia. No, I can see that an Italy in unity, a great newly constituted nation, might be reasonably asked by her liberator to shift her frontier from beyond the Alps, but for Victor Emmanuel to be expected at Milan to put his hand into his pocket and pay, without completion of facts, or consultation of peoples, this would be to 'faire le marchand' indeed, and I could write no odes to a man who could act so. I don't sell my soul to Napoleon, and

applaud him *quand même*. But absolutely I disbelieve in this version, Isa. If the war had not stopped at Villafranca, it would have been European; *that*, if not clear at the time, is clear now — clear from the official statement of Prussia. By putting diplomacy in the place of the war, a great deal was absolutely attained, besides a better standpoint for a renewal of the war, should that be necessary. 'Hence those tears' — of Villafranca!

The letter-writer is very keen, and evidently hears a good deal, while he selects after his own judgment. *I* am glad to hear that 'L'Opinion Nationale' represents the efficient power. That's comfortable What's to be done next in the south here rests with *us*, it seems. But what of the occupation of Rome? And what is the meaning of Lamoricière being here 'with the consent of the Emperor'? Lamoricière can mean no good either to the French Government or to Italy; and the Emperor knows it well.

My dearest Isa, let us make haste to say that of course I shall be glad to let my book be used as is proposed. How will we get a copy to M. Fauvety? I enclose an order to Chapman and Hall which M. Dall' Ongaro[1] may enclose to his friend, who must enclose it on to England, with a letter conveying his address in Paris. Then the book may be sent by the *book post*. Wouldn't that do?

I shall give a copy to Dall' Ongaro (when I can get a supply), and one for the Trollopes also, never forgetting dear Kate! (and I do expect copies through the embassy) but I have not seen a word of the book yet. I only know that, being Cæsar's wife, I am not merely 'suspected' (poor wife!), but dishonored before the 'Athenæum' world as an unnatural vixen, who, instead of staying at home and spinning wool, stays at home and curses her own land. 'It is my own, my native land!' If, indeed, I had gone abroad and cursed other people's lands, there would have been no

[1] The Italian poet.

objection. That poem, as addressed to America, has always been considered rather an amiable and domestic trait on my part. But England! Heavens and earth! What a crime! The very suspicion of it is guilt.

The fact is, between you and me, Isa, certain of those quoted stanzas do 'fit' England 'as if they were made for her,' which they were *not* though. . . .

According to your letters, Venetia seems pushed off into the future a little, don't you think?

Still, they are interesting, very. Get Dall' Ongaro to remember me in future. The details about Antonelli shall go to him. I am delighted at the idea of being translated by him. . . .

Write to me, my dearly loved Isa. You who are true! let me touch you!

Yours ever from the heart.

Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

28 Via del Tritone:
Monday and Tuesday [April 1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — I send you under this enclosure an abstract of some papers given to me by somebody who can't be named, with a sketch of Antonelli. I wasn't allowed to copy; I was only to abstract. But everything is in. The whole has been verified and may be absolutely relied on, I hear. So long I have waited for them. Should I have translated them into Italian, I wonder? Or can Dall' Ongaro get to the bottom of them so? Dates of birth are not mentioned, I observe. From another quarter I may get those. About has the character of romancing a little.

Not a word do you say of your health. Do another time. Remember that your previous letter left you in bed.

Dearest Isa, how it touched me, your putting away the 'Saturday Review'! But dear, don't care more for me than

I do for myself. That very Review, lent to us, *we* lent to the Storys. Dear, the abuse of the press is the justification of the poems; so don't be reserved about these attacks. I was a little, little vexed by a letter this morning from my brother George; but *pazienza*, we must bear these things. Robert called yesterday on Odo Russell, who observed to him that the article in the 'Saturday Review' was infamous, and that the general tone of the newspaper had grown to be so offensive, he should cease to take it in. (Not on my account, observe.) 'But,' said Mr. Russell, 'it's extraordinary, the sensation your wife's book has made. Every paper I see has something to say about it,' added he; 'it is curious. The offence has been less in the objections to England than in the praise of Napoleon. Certainly Monckton Milnes said a good thing when he was asked lately in Paris what, after all, you English wanted. "*We want*," he answered, "*first, that the Austrians should beat you French thoroughly; next, we want that the Italians should be free, and then we want them to be very grateful to us for doing nothing towards it.*" This,' concluded Russell, 'sums up the whole question.' Mark, he is very English, but he can't help seeing what lies before him, having quick perceptions, moreover. Then men have no courage. Milnes, for instance, keeps his sarcasm for Paris, and in England supports his rifle club and all Parliamentary decencies.

Mind you read 'Blackwood.' Though I was rather vexed by George's letter (he is awfully vexed) I couldn't help laughing at my sister Henrietta, who accepts the interpretation of the 'Athenæum' (having read the poems) and exclaims, 'But, oh, Ba, such dreadful curses!' . . .

Mrs. Apthorp has arrived, but I have not seen her nor received the paper. Pins were right, though I should have liked some smaller. 'Monitores' arrived up at the 12. Beyond, nothing. I hear that Mr. Apthorp was struck

with the 'brilliant conversation between you and Miss Cobbe.' You made an impression too, on Mrs. Apthorp.

Oh, Isa, how I should like to be with you in our Florence to-day. Yes, yes, I think of you. Here the day is gloomy, and with a sprinkling now and then of rain. I trust you may have more sun. God bless the city and the hills, and the people who dwell therein.

I have just sent a lyric to Thackeray for his magazine.[1] He begged me for something long ago. Robert suggested that *now* he probably wanted nothing from such profane hands. So I told him that in that case he might send me back my manuscripts. In the more favorable case it may be still too late for this month. The poem is 'meek as maid,' though the last thing I wrote — no touch of 'Deborah' — '*A Musical Instrument.*' How good this 'Cornhill Magazine' is! Anthony Trollope is really superb.[2] I only just got leave from Robert to send something: he is so averse to the periodicals as mediums. . . .

Lamoricière's arrival produces a painful sensation among the people here; and the withdrawal of the French troops has become most unpopular. I am anxious. If the Emperor has consented to his coming, it was pure magnanimity, and very characteristic; but the *cost of this* should be paid by France and not Italy, we must feel besides. I am content about Savoy.

Dearest Isa, you and your 'Saturday Reviewer' shall have Robert's portrait. Are you sure he didn't ask for *mine?* How good you are to us and Landor! God bless you, says

Your tenderly loving

BA.

[1] The *Cornhill Magazine*, the first number of which was published, under Thackeray's editorship, in December 1859. Mrs. Browning's poem, 'A Musical Instrument' (*Poetical Works*, v. 10), was published in the number for July 1860.

[2] His 'Framley Parsonage' was then appearing in the *Cornhill.*

To Mr. Chorley

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: April 13, [1860].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — It is always better to be frank than otherwise; sometimes it is necessary to be frank — that is when one would fain keep a friend, yet has a thing against him which burns in one. I shall put my foot on this spark in a moment; but first I must throw it out of my heart you see, and here it is.

Dearest Mr. Chorley, you have not been just to me in the matter of my 'Poems before Congress.' Why have you not been just to me? You are an honest man and my friend. Those two things might go together. Your opinions, critical or political, are free from stress of friendship. I never expected from you favor or mercy *because* you were my friend (it would have been unworthy of us both) but I did expect justice from you, *although* you were my friend. That is reasonable.

And I consider that as a conscientious critic you were bound to read through the whole of the 'rhyme' called 'A Curse for a Nation' before ticketing it for the public; and I complain that after neglecting to do so and making a mistake in consequence, you refused the poor amends of printing my letter in full. A loose paragraph like this found to-day in your 'Athenæum' about Mrs. Browning 'wishing to state' that the 'Curse' was levelled at America *quoad* negro-slavery, and the satisfaction of her English readers in this correction of what was 'generally thought;' as if Mrs. Browning 'stated' it arbitrarily (perhaps from fright) and as if the poem stated nothing distinctly, and as if the intention of it *could* be 'generally thought' what the 'Athenæum' critic took it to be, except by following his lead or adopting his process of a general skipping of half the said poem — this loose paragraph does not cover a great fault, it seems to me. Well, I have spoken.

As to the extent of the 'general thought,' we cannot, of

course, judge here, where it is so difficult to get access to periodicals. We have seen, however, two virulent articles from enemies in 'Blackwood' and the 'Saturday Review,' the latter sparing none of its native mud through three columns; *not* to speak of a renewal of the charge in several political articles with a most flattering persistency. Both these writers (being enemies) keep clear of the 'general thought' suggested by a friend, and accepted indeed by friendly and generous reviewers in the 'Atlas' and 'Daily News.' Therefore I feel perfectly unaggrieved by all the enemies' hard words. They speak from their own point of view, and have a right to speak.

In fact, in printing the poems, I did not expect to help my reputation in England, but simply to deliver my soul, to get the relief to my conscience and heart, which comes from a pent-up word spoken or a tear shed. Whatever I may have ever written of the least worth, has represented a conviction in me, something in me felt as a truth. I never wrote to please any of you, not even to please my own husband. Every genuine artist in the world (whatever his degree) goes to heaven for speaking the truth. It is one of the beatitudes of art, and attainable without putting off the flesh.

To be plain, and not mystical, it is obvious that if I had expected compliments and caresses from the English press to my 'Poems before Congress,' the said poems would have been little deserved in England, and a greater mistake on my part than any committed by the 'Athenæum,' which is saying much.

There! I have done. The spark is under my shoe. If in 'losing my temper' I have 'lost my music,' don't let it be said that I have lost my friend by my own fault and choice also.

For I would not willingly lose him, though he should be unjust to me thrice, instead of this once throughout our intercourse. Affectionately yours, dear Mr. Chorley,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

To Mr. Chorley

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: May 2, [1860].

My dear Mr. Chorley, — I make haste to answer your letter, and beg you to do the like in putting out of your life the least touch of pain or bitterness connected with me. It is true, true, true, that some of my earliest gladness in literary sympathy and recognition came from you. I was grateful to you then as a stranger, and I am not likely ever to forget it as a friend. Believe this of me, as I feel it of *you*.

In the matter of reviews and of my last book, and before leaving the subject for ever, I want you distinctly to understand that my complaint related simply to the mistake in facts, and not to any mistake in opinion. The quality of neither mercy nor justice should be strained in the honest reviewer by the personal motive; and, because you felt a regard for me, *that* was no kind of reason why you should like my book.

In printing the poems, I well knew the storm of execration which would follow. Your zephyr from the 'Athenæum' was the first of it, gentle indeed in comparison with various gusts from other quarters. All fair it was from your standpoint, to see me as a prophet without a head, or even as a woman in a shrewish temper, and if my husband had not been especially pained by my being held up at the end of a fork as the unnatural she-monster who had 'cursed' her own country (following the Holy Father), I should have left the '*mistake*' to right itself, without troubling the 'Athenæum' office with the letter they would not insert. In fact, Robert was a little vexed with me for not being vexed enough. I was only vexed enough when the 'Athenæum' corrected its misstatement in its own way. *That did* extremely vex me, for it made me look ungenerous, cowardly, mean — as if, in haste to escape from the dogs in England, I threw them the good name of America. 'Mrs. Browning *now states*.'

Well, dear Mr. Chorley, it was not your doing. So the thing that 'vexed me enough' in you was a mistake of mine. Let us forgive one another our mistakes; and there, an end. *I* was wrong in taking for granted that the letter which referred to your review was entrusted to you to dispose of; and you were not right in being in too much haste to condemn a book you disliked to give the due measure of attention to every page of it. The insurgents being plainly insurgents, you shot one at least of them without trial, as was done in Spain the other day. True, that even favorable critics have fallen here and there into your very mistake; but is not that mainly attributable to the suggestive power of the 'Athenæum,' do you not believe so yourself? 'Thais led the way!'

And now that we clasp hands again, my dear friend, let me say one word as to the 'argument' of my last poems. Once, in a kind and generous review of 'Aurora Leigh,' you complained a little of 'new lights.' Now I appeal to you. Is it not rather *you* than I, who deal in 'new lights,' if the liberation of a people and the struggle of a nation for existence have ceased in your mind to be the right arguments for poetry? Observe, I may be wrong or right about Napoleon. He may be snake, scoundrel, devil, in his motives. But the thing he did was done before the eyes of all. His coming here was real, the stroke of his sword was indubitable, the rising and struggle of the people was beyond controversy, and the state of things at present is a fact. What if the father of poetry Homer (to go back to the oldest lights) made a mistake about the cause of Achilles' wrath. What if Achilles really wanted to get rid of Briseis and the war together, and sulked in his tent in a great sham? Should we conclude against the artistic propriety of the poet's argument therefore?

You greatly surprise me by such objections. It is objected to 'new lights,' as far as I know, that we are apt to be too metaphysical, self-conscious, subjective — everything

for which there are hard German words. The reproaches made against myself have been often of this nature, as you must be well aware. 'Beyond human sympathies' is a phrase in use among critics of a certain school. But that, in any school, any critic should consider the occasions of great tragic movements (such as a war for the life of a nation) unfit occasions for poetry, improper arguments, fills me with an astonishment which I can scarcely express adequately, and, pardon me, I can only understand your objection by a sad return on the English persistency in its mode of looking at the Italian war. You have looked at it always too much as a mere table for throwing dice — so much for France's ambition, so much for Piedmont's, so much stuff for intrigue in an English Parliament for ousting Whigs, or inning Conservatives. You have not realised to yourselves the dreadful struggle for national life, you who, thank God, have your life as a nation safe. A calm scholastic Italian friend of ours said to my husband at the peace, '*It's sad to think how the madhouses will fill after this.*' You do not conceive clearly the agony of a whole people with their house on fire, though Lord Brougham used that very figure to recommend your international neutrality. No, if you conceived of it, if you did not dispose of it lightly in your thoughts as of a Roccabella conspiracy, full half vanity, and only half serious — a Mazzini explosion, not a quarter justified, and taking place often on an affair of *métier* — you, a thoughtful and feeling man, would cry aloud that if poets represent the deepest things, the most tragic things in human life, they need not go further for an argument. And *I* say, my dear Mr. Chorley, that if, while such things are done and suffered, the poet's business is to rhyme the stars and walk apart, *I* say that Mr. Carlyle is right, and that the world requires more earnest workers than such dreamers can be.

For my part, I have always conceived otherwise of poetry. I believe that if anything written by me has been recognised

even by *you*, the cause is that I have written not to please you or any critic, but the deepest truth out of my own heart and head. I don't dream and make a poem of it. Art is not either all beauty or all use, it is essential truth which makes its way through beauty into use. Not that I say this for myself. Artistically, I may have failed in these poems — that is for the critic to consider; but in the choice of their argument I have not failed artistically, *I think*, or my whole artistic life and understanding of life have failed.

There, I cannot persuade you of this, but I believe it. I have tried to stand on the facts of things before I began to feel 'dithyrambically.' Thought out coldly, then felt upon warmly. I will not admit of 'being heated out of fairness!' I deny it, and stand upon my innocency.

And after all, 'Casa Guidi Windows' was a book that commended itself to you, Mr. Chorley.

[*The rest of this letter is missing.*]

To John Forster

28 Via del Tritone, Rome: Monday [May 1860].

I have tried and taken pains to see the truth, and have spoken it as I have seemed to see it. If the issue of events shall prove me wrong about the E. Napoleon, the worse for *him*, I am bold to say, rather than for me, who have honored him only because I believed his intentions worthy of the honor of honest souls.

If he lives long enough, he will explain himself to all. So far, I cannot help persisting in certain of my views, because they have been held long enough to be justified by the past on many points. The intervention in Italy, while it overwhelmed with joy, did not dazzle me into doubts of the motive of it, but satisfied a patient expectation and fulfilled a logical inference. Thus it did not present itself to my mind as a caprice of power, to be followed perhaps by

an onslaught on Belgium, and an invasion of England. These things were out of the beat; and *are*. There may follow Hungarian, Polish, or other questions — but there won't follow an English question unless the English *make* it, which, I grieve to think, looks every day less impossible.

Dear Mr. F., have you read 'La Fin des Traités,' written, some of it, by L. N.'s own hand? Do you consider About's 'Carte de l'Europe' (as the 'Times' does) 'a dull *jeu d'esprit?*' The wit isn't dull, and the serious intention, hid in those mummy wrappings, is not inauthentic. Official — certainly not; but Napoleonic — yes. I believe so. And I seem to myself to have strong reasons.

But you are sorry that Cavour loves popularity in England. I cried rather bitterly, 'Better so!' A complete injustice comes to nearly the same thing as a complete justice. Have we not watched for a year while every saddle of iniquity has been tried on the Napoleonic back, and nothing fitted? Wasn't he to crush Piedmontese institutions like so many egg-shells? Was he ever going away with his army, and hadn't he occupied houses in Genoa with an intention of bombarding the city? Didn't he keep troops in the north after Villafranca on purpose to come down on us with a Grand Duke at best, or otherwise with a swamping Kingdom of Etruria and Plon-Plon to rule it? and wouldn't he give back Bologna to the Pope bound by seven devils fiercer than the first, and prove Austria bettered by Solferino? Also, were not Cipriani, Farini, and other patriots, his 'mere creatures' in treacherous correspondence with the Tuileries; 'doing his dirty work,' 'keeping things in suspense' till destruction should arrange itself on falsehood? Have I not read and heard from the most intelligent English journals, and the best-informed English politicians (men with one foot and two ears in the Cabinet) these true things written and repeated, and watched while they died out into the Vast Inane and Immense Absurd from which they were born?

So I would rather have a rounded, complete injustice, as we can't have the complete justice. After all, the thing done is only a nation saved. Hurry up the men who did it on the same cord! Ought not Cavour to be there?

And if the Savoy cession is a crime, he is criminal, he, who undeniably from the beginning contemplated it, not as the price of the war, but as the condition of a newly constituted Italy. And the condition implies more than is understood, more than the consenting parties dare to confess — can at present afford to confess — unless I am deceived by information, which has hitherto justified itself in the event. Be patient with me one moment — for if I differ from you, I seem to have access to another class of facts than you see. If Italy, for instance, expands itself to a nation of twenty-six millions, would you blame the Emperor who 'did it all' (Cavour's own phrase) for providing an answer to his own people in some small foresight about the frontier, when in the course of fifty or a hundred years they may reproach his memory with the existence of an oppressive rival or enemy next door? Mr. Russell said to me last January 'Everything that comes out proves the Emperor to have acted towards Italy like an Italian rather than a Frenchman.' At which we applaud; that is, you, and Mr. R., and I, and the Italians generally applaud. But — let us be just — *that* would not be a satisfactory opinion in France of the Head of the State, would it, do you think? It was obviously his duty not to be negligent of certain eventualities in the case of his own country, to be a 'Frenchman' *there*.

Oh, Savoy has given me pain; and I would rather for the world's sake that a great action had remained out of reach of the hypothetical whispers of depreciators. I would rather not hear Robert say, for instance: 'It was a great action; but he has taken eighteenpence for it, which is a pity.' I don't think this judgment fair — and much worse judgments are passed than that, which is very painful. But, after all, this thing may have been a necessary duty

on L. N.'s part, and I can understand that it was so. For this loss of the Italians, *that* is not to be dwelt on; while for the Savoyards, none knew better than Cavour (not even L. N.) the leaning of those populations towards France for years back; it has been an inconvenient element of his government. Whether there are or are not natural frontiers, there are natural barriers, and the Alps hinder trade and make direct influence difficult; and what the popular vote would be nobody here doubted. Be sure that nobody did in Switzerland. The Swiss have been insincere, it seems to me — talking of terror when they thought chiefly of territory. But I feel tenderly for poor heroic Garibaldi, who has suffered, he and his minority. He is not a man of much brain; which makes the subject the more cruel to him. But I can't write of Garibaldi this morning, so anxious we are after an unpleasant dispatch yesterday. He is a hero, and has led a forlorn hope out to Sicily, to succeed for Italy, or to fail for himself. It's 'imprudence,' if he fails: if otherwise, who shall praise him enough? it's salvation and glory.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome], 28 Via del Tritone: May 18, 1860 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — It seems to me that you have drunk so much England, which cheers *and* inebriates, as to have forgotten your Italian friends. Here have I been waiting with my load of gratitude, till my shoulders ache under it, not knowing to what address to carry it! Sarianna sent me one address of your London lodgings, with the satisfactory addition that you were about to move immediately. You really *might* have written to me before, unkindest and falsest of Fannies! Or else (understand) you should not have sent me those graceful and suggestive drawings, for which only now I am able to thank you.

Thank you, thank you, thank you. It was very kind of you to let me have them.

Then, pray how did you get my 'Poems before Congress?' Was I not to send you an order? Here I send one at least, whether you scorn my gift or not; and by this sign you will inherit also an 'Aurora Leigh.'

Yes, I expected nothing better from the 'British public,' which, strictly conforming itself to the higher civilisation of the age, gives sympathy only where it gives 'the belt.'[1] As the favorite hero says in his last eloquent letter, 'In all my actions, whether in private or public life, may I be worthy of having had the honor . . . *of a notice in the "Times,"*' he concludes — 'of the abuse of the "Saturday Review"' &c., &c., say *I*.

For the rest, being turned out of the old world, I fall on my feet in the new world, where people have been generous, and even publishers turned liberal. Think of my having an offer (on the ground of that book) from a periodical in New York of a hundred dollars for every single poem, though as short as a sonnet — that is, for its merely passing through their pages on the road to the publishers proper. Oh, I shall cry aloud and boast, since people choose to abuse me. Did you see how I was treated in 'Blackwood'? In fact, you and all women, though you hated me, should be vexed on your own accounts. As for me, it's only what I expected, and I have had that deep satisfaction of 'speaking though I died for it,' which we are all apt to aspire to now and then. Do you know I was half inclined to send my little book to Mr. Cobden, and then I drew back into my shell, with native snail-shyness.

We remain here till the end of May, when we remove back to Florence. Meanwhile I am in great anxiety about

[1] The championship trophy of the prize ring. The great fight between Sayers and Heenan had just taken place (April 17, 1860), and had engrossed the interest of all England, to say nothing of America.

Sicily. Garibaldi's hardy enterprise may be followed by difficult complications.

Let us talk away from politics, which set my heart beating uncomfortably, and don't particularly amuse you. . . .

Have you read the 'Mill by the Floss,' and what of it? The author is here, they say, with her elective affinity, and is seen on the Corso walking, or in the Vatican musing. Always together. They are said to visit nobody, and to be beheld only at unawares. Theodore Parker removed to Florence in an extremity of ill-health, and is dead there. I feel very sorry. There was something high and noble about the man — though he was not deep in proportion. Hatty Hosmer has arrived in America, and found her father alive and better, but threatened with another attack which must be final. Gibson came to us yesterday, and we agreed that we never found him so interesting. I grieve to hear that Mr. Page's pictures (another Venus and a Moses) have been rejected at your Academy.

Robert deserves no reproaches, for he has been writing a good deal this winter — working at a long poem[1] which I have not seen a line of, and producing short lyrics which I *have* seen, and may declare worthy of him. For me, if I have attained anything of force and freedom by living near the oak, the better for me. But I hope you don't think that I mimic [him, or] lose my individuality. [Penini] sends his love with Robert's. [He ri]des his pony and learns his Latin and looks as pretty as ever — to my way of [thinking]. If you don't write directly, address to Florence.

[1] It is not clear what this can be. Browning published nothing between 1855 ('Men and Women') and 1864 ('Dramatis Personæ'), and there is no long poem in the latter, unless 'A Death in the Desert' and 'Sludge the Medium' may be so described. The latter is not unlikely to have been written now, when Home's performances were rampant. His next really long poem was the 'Ring and the Book,' which certainly had not yet been begun.

We have another thick Indian letter for you, but Robert is afraid of sending it till you give us a safe address.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome: about May 1860.]

[*The beginning of this letter is wanting.*]

When the English were raging about Savoy, I heard a word or two from Pantaleoni which convinced me that the Imperial wickedness did not strike him as the sin against the Holy Ghost precisely. In fact, I doubt much that he (an intimate friend of Massimo d'Azeglio) knew all about it before the war.

By the bye, why does Azeglio write against Rome being the capital just now? It seems to us all very ill-advised. Italy may hereafter select the capital she pleases, but now her game ought to be to get Rome, as an indispensable part of the play, as soon as possible. There are great difficulties in the way — that's very sure. It's quite time, indeed, that Mrs. Trollope's heart should warm a little towards the Emperor, for no ruler has risked so much for a nation to which he did not belong (unless he wished to conquer it) as Napoleon has for this nation. He has been tortuous in certain respects — in the official presentation of the points he was resolute on carrying — but from first to last there has been one steady intention — the liberation of Italy without the confusion of a general war. Moreover, his eyes are upon Venice, and have been since Villafranca. What I *see* in the very suggestion to England about stopping Garibaldi from attacking the mainland was a preparation to the English mind towards receiving the consequence of unity, namely, the seizure of Venice. 'You must be prepared for that. You see where you are going? You won't cry out when France joins her ally again!' Lord John didn't see the necessity. No, of course he didn't. He never does see except what he runs against.

He protested to the last (by the Blue Book) against G.'s attack; he was of opinion, to the last, that Italy would be better in two kingdoms. But he *wouldn't intervene*. In which he was perfectly right, of course, only that people should see where their road goes even when they walk straight. And mark, if France had herself prevented Garibaldi's landing, Lord John would simply have 'protested.' *He said so*. France might have done it without the least inconvenience, therefore, and she *did not*. She confined herself to observing that if V. E. *might* have Naples, he *must* have Venice, and that there could be no good in objecting to logical necessities of accepted situations. In spite of which, every sort of weight was hung on the arms of France that no aid should be given for Venetia. Certain things written to Austria, and uttered through Lord Cowley, I can't forgive Lord John for; my heart does not warm, except with rage. To think of writing only the other day to an Austrian Court: '*All we can do for you* is to use our strongest influence with France that she should not help Italy against you in Venetia. And in our opinion you will always be strong enough to baffle Italy. Italy can't fight you alone.' The words I am not sure of, but the idea is a transcript. And the threats uttered through Lord Cowley were worse — morally hideous, I think.

Napoleon's position in France is hard enough of itself. Forty thousand priests, with bishops of the colour of Mon. d'Orleans and company, having, of course, a certain hold on the agricultural population which forms so large a part of the basis of the imperial throne. Then add to that the parties — the 'Liberals' (so called) and others, who use this question as a weapon simply. In the Senate and Legislative Body they haven't forgotten how to talk, have they — these French. The passion and confusion seem to have been extreme. After all, we shall get a working majority, I do hope and trust, for all the intelligent supporters of the Government are with us, and the Chamber will be dissolved at need. There is talk of it already in Rome. . . .

At last we see your advertisement. *Viva* 'Agnes Tremorne'![1] We find it in 'Orley Farm.' How admirably this last opens! We are both delighted with it. What a pity it is that so powerful and idiomatic a writer should be so incorrect grammatically and scholastically speaking! Robert insists on my putting down such phrases as these: 'The Cleeve was distant from Orley two miles, though it *could not be driven* under five.' '*One rises up the hill.*' 'As good as *him.*' 'Possessing more *acquirements* than he would have *learned* at Harrow.' *Learning acquirements!* Yes, they are faults, and should be put away by a first-rate writer like Anthony Trollope. It's always worth while to be correct. But do understand through the pedantry of these remarks that we are full of admiration for the book. The movement is so excellent and straightforward — walking like a man, and 'rising up-hill,' and not going round and round, as Thackeray has taken to do lately. He's clever always, but he goes round and round till I'm dizzy, for one, and don't know where I am. I think somebody has tied him up to a post, leaving a tether. Dearest Isa, the day before yesterday I had two letters from Madame M—— to ask us to take rooms. He is coming directly to Rome. She says he has much to tell me, and it's evident, of course, that an Italian senator, native to the Roman States, wouldn't come here just now without mission or permission. I am full of expectation, but will say no more.

Dearest Isa, have I been long in writing indeed? You see, I let so many letters accumulate which I hadn't the heart to reply to, that on taking up the account, I had over much to do in writing letters. Then I have been working a little at some Italian lyrics. Three more are gone lately to the 'Independent,' and another is ready to go. All this, with helping Pen to prepare for the Abbé, has filled my hands, and they are soon tired, my Isa, nowadays. When the sun goes down, I am down. At eight I generally am

[1] A novel by Miss Blagden.

in bed, or little after. And people will come in occasionally in the day, and annul me. I had a visit from Lady Annabella Noel lately, Lord Byron's granddaughter. Very quiet, and very intense, I should say. She is going away, and I shall not see her more than that once, I dare say; but she looked at me so with her still deep eyes, and spoke so feelingly, that I kissed her when she went away. Another new acquaintance is Lady Marion Alford, the Marquis of Northampton's daughter, very eager about literature and art and Robert, for all which reasons I should care for her; also Hatty calls her divine. I thought there was the least touch of affectation of fussiness, but it may not be so. She knelt down before Hatty the other day and gave her — placed on her finger — the most splendid ring you can imagine, a ruby in the form of a heart, surrounded and crowned with diamonds. Hatty is frankly delighted, and says so with all sorts of fantastical exaggerations.

Tell me what you think of the photographs which Robert sends, with his best love. I think the head perfect, and the other very poetical and picturesque. I wish I had mine to send Kate, tell her with my dear love, but I have not one, nor can get one. Perhaps I may have to sit again before leaving Rome, and then she shall be remembered. And Robert will give her his.

Pray don't apologise for your Borden. He is very much to be liked. Mrs. Bruen is charmed. He has been three times to talk with me, and Robert has called on him twice. Robert is quite vexed at your 'pretension' about having friends not good enough for his acquaintance. Yes, really he was vexed. 'Isa *never* understood him — not she!'

Is there not reason, we may murmur? But the truth is he is always ready (be pleased to know) to honour your drafts in acquaintanceship, and chooses to be considered ready.

[*The remainder of this letter is wanting.*]

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Florence: June 16, 1860 [postmark].

My dearest Fanny, — I must use my opportunity of sending you these photographs, because I think you will care to have them. Peni is *himself*, not a likeness, but an identity. *I*, like a devil, or the Emperor Napoleon, am not as black as I seem; but Pen looks lovely enough to satisfy my vanity.

Your Indian poet's letter was despatched to you from Rome, and 'so Apollo saved me.' Oh — if you knew how I hate giving opinions! I think a poet's opinion of another poet should be paid by some triple fee. I, at least, always feel that after being ingenuous on these occasions and advising persons who can barely spell against publishing their epic poems, one is supposed to be secretly influenced by the fear of a rival or worse. Give me a triple fee.

Poor dearest Fanny, of course you are in the chain, being in England. You are moved to set down the Emperor as 'the Beast' 666, of course. If he crushes 'Garibaldi you must give him up.' Yes; but what an If. If you stab Miss Heaton with a golden bodkin, right through the heart, under circumstances of peculiar cruelty, I shall have to give up *you*. If I bake Penini in a pie and eat him, you'll have to give up me.

The Emperor Napoleon is faithful and will be faithful to the Italian cause, and to the cause of the nationalities, as long as and wherever it is prudent, for the general interest; possible without dangerous complications. He has risked enough for it, to be trusted a little I think — his life and dynasty certainly. At this moment I hear from Rome of a great dinner given by Lamoricière to his staff, or by his staff to him (I don't know which), only that the health of *Henri cinq* was suggested and drank at it. Gorgon telegraphed the news to Paris. What then? English newspapers (even such

papers as the 'Daily News') have stated that Lamoricière was doing Napoleonic business at Rome. Perhaps this is of it.

Chapman junior is in Florence (doing business upon Lever I believe), and he maintains that I have done myself no mortal harm by the Congress poems, which incline to a second edition after all. Had it been otherwise I yet never should have repented speaking the word out of me which burnt in me. Printing that book did me real good. For the rest, 'Aurora Leigh' is in the press for a *fifth* edition. Read the 'Word for Truth by a Seaman,' written by a naval officer of high reputation.

We left Rome on the 4th of June, and travelled by vettura through Orvieto and Chiusi. Beautiful scenery, interesting pictures and tombs, but a fatiguing journey. At least, Pen's pony and I were both of us unusually fatigued, and scarcely, at the end of a week, am I myself yet. I am not as strong since my illness last summer. We stay here till the early part of July and then remove to Siena, to the villa we had last year; and there Pen keeps tryst with his Abbé and the Latin. He has made great progress this winter in Latin and much besides, and he isn't going to be a 'wretched little Papist,' as some of our friends precipitately conclude from the fact of his having a priest for a tutor. Indeed Pen has to be restrained into politeness and tolerance towards ecclesiastical dignities. Think of his addressing his instructor (who complained of the weather at Rome one morning), thus — in choice Tuscan: — 'Of course it's the excommunication. The prophet says that a curse begins with the curser's own house; and so it is with the Holy Father's curse.' Wasn't that clever of Pen? and impertinent, but our Abbé only tried at gravity; he sympathises secretly with the insorgimento d'Italia, and besides is very fond of Pen. Poor Pen, 'innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,' how his mama has been wickedly cursing her native country (after Chorley)! It's hard upon me, Fanny, that

you won't tell me of the spirits, you who can see. Here is even Robert, whose heart softens to the point of letting me have the 'Spiritual Magazine' from England. Do knock at Mrs. Milner Gibson's doors till you get to see the 'hands' and the 'heads' and the 'bodies' and the 'celestial garlands' which she has the privilege of being familiar with. *Touch* the hands. Has Mr. Monckton Milnes seen anything so as to believe? Is it true that Lord Lyndhurst was lifted up in a chair? Does he believe? I hear through Mr. Trollope and Chapman that Edwin Landseer has received the faith, and did everything possible to persuade Dickens to investigate, which Dickens refused. Afraid of the truth, of course, having deeply committed himself to negatives. This is a moral *lâcheté*, hard for my feminine mind to conceive of. Dickens, too, who is so fond of ghost-stories, as long as they are impossible. . . .

I can scarcely imagine the summer's passing without a struggle on the continent of Italy. It can't be, I think. At least we are prepared for it here.

We find Wilson well. Mr. Landor also. He had thrown a dinner out of the window only once, and a few things of the kind, but he lives in a chronic state of ingratitude to the whole world except Robert, who waits for his turn. I am glad to think that poor Mr. Landor is well; unsympathetical to me as he is in his *morale*. He has the most beautiful sea-foam of a beard you ever saw, all in a curl and white bubblement of beauty. He informed us the other morning that he had 'quite given up thinking of a future state — he had *had* thoughts of it once, but that was very early in life.' Mr. Kirkup (who is deafer than a post now) tries in vain to convert him to the spiritual doctrine. Landor laughs so loud in reply that Kirkup hears him.

Pray keep Mr. —— off till we have settled the independence and unity of Italy. It isn't the hour for peace, and we don't want a second Villafranca. By the way, I dare say nobody in England lays his face in the dust and acknow-

ledges, in consequence of the official declaration of the Prussian Minister (to the effect that Prussia was to attack on the crossing of the Mincio, and that nothing but the unexpected conclusion of hostilities hindered the general war) — acknowledges that Napoleon stands fully justified in making that peace. I cannot expect so much justice in an Englishman. He would rather bury his past mistake in a present mistake than simply confess it.

Now no more. May God bless you. Do be happy, and do write to me. We talk of Paris and England for next year.

Your very affectionate

Ba.

Robert's love and Pen's.

To Miss Browning

[Florence: about June 1860.]

I didn't write last time, dearest Sarianna, not only because of being over-busy or over-tired, but because I had not the heart that day. Peni had another touch of fever, and was forced to have a doctor and cataplasms to his feet. It was only a day's anxiety, but I didn't like writing just then. He had been in the sun or the wind or something. I was glad to get away from Rome. There were two cases of fever in our courtyard, and both the sun and the shade were *suspects*. As far as Pen is concerned, the evil was averted, and I assure you he is looking in the full bloom of health, and we have been congratulated on all sides on his appearance and growth since we returned to Florence. Riding so much has agreed well with him; and the general results of the Roman campaign cannot be said to be otherwise than favourable. Set down as much for Robert. Everybody exclaims at his stoutness. In fact, never since I have known him has he condescended to put on such an air of *robustness*, there's no other word for it.

Shall we give the glory to Rome, or to *nux*, to which he is constant. For two years and a half he has had recourse to no other remedy, and it has not yet failed to produce its effect. How do you unbelievers account for that? At the same time, I never would think of using it in any active or inflammatory malady, and where a sudden revolution or *scosso* is required from the remedial agent.

We find poor Mr. Landor tolerably amenable to Wilson, and well in health, though he can't live more than three months, he says, and except when Robert keeps him soothed by quoting his own works to him, considers himself in a very wretched condition, which is a sort of satisfaction too. He is a man of great genius, and we owe him every attention on that ground. Otherwise I confess to you he is to me eminently unsympathetic. . . .

If —— 'turns Catholic,' as you say, on the ground of the organisation of certain institutions, it will be a proof of very peculiar ignorance. This power of organisation is *French*, and not Catholic. You look for it in vain in Rome, for instance, except where the organisation comes from France. The *sœurs de charité*, who are of all Catholic nations, are organised entirely by the French. The institutions here are branch institutions. In Rome the tendency of everything is to confusion and 'individuality' with separate pockets. Lamoricière was in despair at it all, and even now people talk of his resigning, though he gave a dinner the other day to his staff, with the toast of '*Henri cinq*.'

Individuality is an excellent thing in its place, and an infamous thing out of it. In England we have some very successful efforts at organisation — the post office, which is nearly perfect, and society, in which the demarcation between class and class is much too perfect to be humane. In other respects we are apt to fail.

We do not fail, however, in organisation only with regard to these charitable institutions. We are very hard and unsympathetic in them. A distinguished woman has been

here lately — a Miss Cobbe (a fellow-worker with Miss Carpenter) — who, having overworked herself, was forced by her physician to come here for three months and rest, under dire penalties. She went to Isa Blagden's, and returned to England and her work just now. She is very acute, and so perfectly without Continental prejudices, that she didn't pretend to much interest even in our Italian movement, having her heart in England and with the poor. But she was much struck, not merely with the order of foreign institutions, but with their superior tenderness and sympathy. The account she gave of the English workhouses and hospitals was very sad, very cruel, corresponding, in fact, to what I have heard from other quarters.

Ah, Sarianna, 'charming old men' who call the Tuscans angels, except that they lie (what an exception!), can be mistaken like others. *That* passes for 'liberality,' does it? We are not angels, and we don't lie — there's no more lying in Italy than in England, I begin to affirm. Also, M. Tassinari was in prison, not a week but a month — and well did he deserve it. We deal now in French coinage, and are to see no more pauls after the middle of next month. Robert thinks it will destroy the last vestige of our cheapness, but I am very favorable to a unification of international coinage. It agrees with my theories, you know.

We are all talking and dreaming Garibaldi just now in great anxiety. Scarcely since the world was a world has there been such a feat of arms. All modern heroes grow pale before him. It was necessary, however, for us all even here, and at Turin just as in Paris, to be ready to disavow him. The whole good of Central Italy was hazarded by it. If it had not been success it would have been an evil beyond failure. The enterprise was forlorner than a forlorn hope. The hero, if he had perished, would scarcely have been sure of his epitaph even.

And 'intervention' *does* mean quite a different thing at Naples and in Lombardy. In Lombardy there was the

foreign tyrant. At Naples Italians deal with Italians; and the Austrian influence is *indirect.* So also at Rome. It is this which makes the difficulty of dealing with Southern Italy and the difference of treatment which you observe in certain French papers.

I am sure, though you don't like photographs, you say, that you will find nothing lacking in what we send you and dearest Nonno of our Penini. It isn't like him, it's himself. As for me, I murmur in the depths of my vanity, that like the Emperor Napoleon (and the devil) I'm not so black as I'm painted; but I forgive everything for Pen's sake. Robert is not very favourably represented, I think. The beard on the upper lip had not been properly clipped, and makes the space seem too long for him. Another time I will mend that. I was very unusually tired after my journey, but am getting past it. Weather was hot; but within two days we have had some cooling rain.

Give my best love to M. Milsand, beside the photographs, and thank him for not being offended in his 'patriotism' by my Congress poems. If he approved of the preface as he says, I can't see how he can have written anything about 'intervention' which I would not accept. Nothing could have ended the intervention of Austria, except the intervention of France; and it was on that account that we feel the latter to be a great and chivalrous action. Italy is grateful. And if France were in difficulty she might count on this delivered nation, as on herself. In spite of all the bad words hurled at me in every English newspaper and periodical nearly (and I assure you I have been put in the pillory among them) the poems are going into a second edition, Chapman says, and 'Aurora Leigh' into a fifth. Also Chapman junior, who has come out here to see after Lever, smooths me down a little about Robert, and says that the sale is bettering itself, and that a new edition of the 'Poems' will soon be wanted. I just now see a pleasant notice of myself in 'Bentley's Magazine.'

Abuse of the 'Congress Poems,' of course. Then a side stroke at 'Aurora Leigh,' which was original, of course, because it's my way to stand alone and attack people; but the principal merit of which otherwise was the suggestion of 'Lucille' (Lytton's new poem) — 'Lucille,' says the critic, being superior in holiness and virtue and that sort of thing to 'Aurora'! Of course.

They subscribed in England five thousand pounds for Tom Sayers. There's the advance of civilisation. Napoleon has gone to Baden to arrange the world a little more comfortably, I hope.

Mr. Lewes and Miss Evans have been here, and are coming back to settle into our congenial bosom. I admire her books so much, that certainly I shall not refuse to receive her, though she is not a medium. Sarianna!

Your ever affectionate sister.

The programme of the previous year was repeated in 1860. Returning from Rome to Florence at the beginning of June, the Brownings in July went to Siena to avoid the extreme heat of the summer at Florence, staying as before at the Villa Alberti. Their visit to Siena was, however, rather shorter than the previous one, lasting only till September.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Browning, during all this time, was losing ground in point of health; and she now received another severe blow in the news of the serious illness of her sister Henrietta (Mrs. Surtees Cook). The anxiety lasted for several months, and ended with the death of Mrs. Cook in the following winter.

To Mrs. Martin

Villa Alberti, Siena: August 21, [1860].

I thank you, my dearest friend, from my heart for your letter, and the ray of sunshine it brought with it. Do yo-

know I was childish enough to kiss it as if it knew what it did. I wish I could kiss *you*. Yes, I have been very unhappy, not giving way on the whole, going about my work as usual, but with a sense of a black veil between me and whatever I did, sometimes feeling incapable of crawling down to sit on the cushion under my own fig-tree for an hour's vision of this beautiful country — sometimes in 'des transes mortelles' of fear.

But we must not be atheists, as a friend said to me the other day. I hope I do not live quite as if I were. But it was a great shock from the beginning. Henrietta always seemed so strong that I never feared that way.

My first impulse was to rush to England, but this has been over-ruled by everybody, and I believe wisely. With my usual luck I should just have increased the sum of evil instead of bringing a single advantage to anyone. The best thing I can do for the others, is to keep quiet and try not to give cause for trouble on my account, to be patient and live on God's daily bread from day to day. I had a crumb or two the day before yesterday through Storm, who thought there might be a little less pain — and here you have sent me almost a slice — may God be thanked! How good you were to mention the doctor! It is grievous to me to think of her suffering. Darling!

I knew how strong your sympathy and personal feeling would be, and, even on that account, I had not the heart and courage to write to you. But no, dearest friends, I did not receive the letter you speak of, though I heard of your grief a good while afterwards. And so sorry I was — we both were — so sorry for Fanny, so sorry for you! May God bless you all! How the spiritual world gets thronged to us with familiar faces, till at last, perhaps, the world here will seem the vague and strange world, even while we remain.

Still, it is beautiful out of this window; and of public affairs in Italy, I am stirred to think with the most vivid

interest through all. The rapture is not as in the northern war last year, because (you don't understand that in England) last year we fought the Austrian and now it is Italian against Italian,[1] which tempers every triumph with a certain melancholy. Also the Italian question in the south was decided in the north, and remained only a question of time, abbreviated (many think rashly) by our hero Garibaldi. For the crisis, so quickened, involves very serious dangers and most solemn thoughts. The southern difficulty may be considered solved — so we think — but just now that very solution opens out, as we all fear a new Austrian invasion in the north, backed indirectly at least by Prussia and Germany, who will use the opportunity in carrying out the coalition against France. There seems no doubt of the mischief hatched at Toeplitz. I wish I had known that England's influence was not used in drawing together those two powers. Prussia deserves to be —— what shall I say? — docked of her Rhenish provinces? It would be a too slight punishment. She caused the Villafranca halt (according to her official confession by the mouth of Baron Schleinitz, last spring), and now this second time, would she interrupt the liberation of Italy? The aspect of affairs looks very grave. As to England, England wishes well to this country at this present time, but *she will make no sacrifices* (not even of her hatreds, least of all, perhaps, of her blind hatreds), for the sake of ten Italys. Tell dear Mr. Martin that after the speech for the Defences, I gave up Lord Palmerston for ever. He plays double. He is too shrewd to believe in the probability of invasions, &c., &c., but he wants a shield to guard his sword-arm. The statesmanship of England pines for new blood, for ideas of the epoch, and the Russell old-fogyism will not do any more at all. These old bottles won't hold the new wine. People

[1] Garibaldi was now engaged in his Neapolitan campaign. Sicily (except Messina) had been cleared of the Neapolitan troops by the end of July, and on August 19 Garibaldi had landed in Calabria.

are positively calling on the Muse and William Pitt. It's religion to hate France, and to set up a 'Boney' as a 'raw head and bloody bones' sort of scarecrow. But it won't do. As the Revolutionists say, 'È troppo tardi.'

I am not, however, in furies all day, dearest Mrs. Martin. (I answer satisfactorily your question whether I am 'ever calm.') The newspapers from various parts of Italy thunder down on us here, not to speak of 'Galignanis' and 'Saturday Reviews.' See how calm-blooded I must be to bear the 'Saturday Review.' (I consider it a curiosity in vice, certainly.) Then we have books from the subscription library in Florence, and sights of the 'Cornhill,' and political pamphlets by the book post; nay, even the 'Spiritual Magazine,' sent by Chapman and Hall, in the last number of which that clever and brave William Howitt (who, like a man, is foolish sometimes) suggests gravely in an article that I have lately been 'biologised by infernal spirits,' in order to the production of certain bad works in the service of 'Moloch,' meaning, of course, L. N. Oh! and did anyone tell you how Harriet Martineau, in her political letters to America, set me down with her air of serene superiority? But such things never chafe me — never. They don't even quicken my pulsation. And the place we are passing the summer in is very calm — a great lonely villa, in the midst of purple hills and vineyards, olive-trees and fig-trees like forest-trees; a deep soothing silence. A mile off we have friends, and my dear friend Miss Blagden is in a villa half a mile off. This for the summer. Also, we brought with us from Florence and dropped in a villino not far, our friend Mr. Landor (Walter Savage), who is under Robert's guardianship, having quarrelled with everybody in and out of England. I call him our adopted son. (You did not know I had a son of eighty-six and more.) Wilson lives with him, and Robert receives from his family in England means for his support. But really the office is hard, and I tell Robert that he must be prepared for the consequences:

an outbreak and a printed statement that he (Robert), instigated by his wicked wife, had attempted to poison him (Landor) slowly. Such an extraordinary union of great literary gifts and incapacity of will has seldom surprised the world. Of course he does not live with us, you know, either here or in Florence, but my husband manages every detail of his life, and both the responsibility and trouble are considerable. Still he is a great writer. We owe him some gratitude therefore.

Penini has his pony here, and rides with his father. We have had the coolest summer I ever remember in Italy. I *could* have been very happy. But God, who 'tempers the wind,' finds it necessary for the welfare of some of us to temper the sunshine also. . . .

As the very poorest proof of gratitude for your letter, Robert suggests that I should enclose this photograph of Penini and myself taken at Rome this last spring. You will like to have them, we fancy, but it is Robert's gift. I was half inclined last year to send you a photograph from Field Talfourd's picture of me,[1] but I shrank back, knowing that dear Mr. Martin would cry out at the flattery of it, which he well might do. But this photograph from nature can't be flattered, so I hazard it. You see the locks are dark still, not white, and the sun, in spite, has blackened the face to complete the harmony. Pen is very like, and very sweet we think.

Do, when you write, speak of yourself — yourselves. I hope you like the 'Mill on the Floss.'

Our love to dearest Mr. Martin and you.

Let me be as ever,

Your affectionate and grateful

Ba.

[1] Now in the National Portrait Gallery. A reproduction of it is given as the frontispiece to vol. v. of the *Poetical Works*.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

Villa Alberti, Siena, Sardegna: August 25, [1860].

My dearest Fanny, — I received your letter with thanks upon thanks. It seemed long since I heard or wrote. I have been very sad, very — with a stone hung round my heart, and a black veil between me and all that I do, think, or look at. One of my sisters is very ill in England — my married sister — an internal tumour, accompanied with considerable suffering, and doubtful enough as to its issue to keep us all (I can answer at least for myself) in great misery. Robert says I exaggerate, and I think and know that consciously or unconsciously he wants to save me pain. She went to London, and the medical man called it an anxious case. We all know what that must mean. For a little time I was in an anguish of fear, and though come to believe now that no great change any way is to be expected quickly, you would pity what I feel when the letters are at hand. May God have mercy on us all! I wanted at first to get to England, but everyone here and there was against it, and I suppose it would have been a pure selfishness on my part to persist in going, seeing that the fatigue and the cold in England alone would have broken me up to a faggot (though of not so much use as to burn) so that I should have complicated other people's difficulties, without much mending my own. Still it would have been comfort to me (however selfish) to have just held her hand. But no. Oh, I am resigned to its being wiser. I am shaken, even at this distance. She has three children younger than my Peni. Don't let me talk of it any more.

You see, Fanny, my 'destiny' has always been to be entirely useless to the people I should like to help (except to my little Pen sometimes in pushing him through his lessons, and even so the help seems doubtful, scholastically speaking, to Robert!) and to have only power at the end of

my pen, and for the help of people I don't care for. At moments lately, thanks from a stranger for this or that have sounded ghastly to me who can't go to smooth a pillow for my own darling sister. Now, I *won't* talk of it any more. After all I try to be patient and wait quietly, and there ought to be hope and faith meantime.

The pen-utilities themselves don't pass uncontested, as you observe. Yes, I see the 'Spiritual Magazine,' and remarked how I was scourged in the house of my friends. Robert shouted in triumph at it, and hoped I was pleased, and as for myself, it really did make me smile a little, which was an advantage, in the sad humour I was in at the time. 'Biologised by infernal spirits since "*Casa Guidi Windows*,"' yet 'Casa Guidi Windows' was not wholly vicious it seems to me, nor 'Aurora' utterly corrupt. And Mr. Howitt is both a clever man, and an honest and brave man, for all his sweeping opinions. Biologised and be-Harrised *he* is certainly. What an extraordinary admiration! I wonder at *that* more than at any of the external spiritual phenomena. Dearest Fanny, you were very, very good and generous to take my part with the editor — but *laissez faire*. These things do one no harm — and, for me, they don't even vex me. I had an anonymous letter from England the other day, from somebody who recognised me, he said, in some prodigious way as a great Age-teacher, all but divine, I believe, and now gave me up on account of certain atrocities — first, for the poem 'Pan'[1] in the 'Cornhill' (considered *immoral!*), and then for having had my 'brain so turned by the private attentions and flatteries of the Emperor Napoleon when I was in Paris, that I have devoted myself since to help him in the gratification of his selfish ambitions.' Conceive of this, written with an air of conviction, and on the best information. Now, of the two imputations, I much prefer 'the inspiration from hell.' There's something grandiose about

[1] 'A Musical Instrument;' see p. 377, above.

that, to say nothing of the superior honesty of the position.

What a 'mountainous me' I am 'piling up' in this letter, I who want rather to write of *you*. . . .

Italy ought not to draw you just now, Fanny. We are all looking for war, and wondering where the safety is. A Piccolomini said yesterday that it was as safe at Rome as in Florence, which only proved Florence unsafe. Austria may come down on Central Italy any day; and sooner or later there must be war. The Storys are alarmed enough to avoid going back to Rome until the end of November, when things may be a little arranged. The indignation here is greatest against 'questa canaglia di Germania.' Toeplitz means mischief both against France and Italy — that is plain. The Prince of Prussia gave his 'parole de gentilhomme' meaning the word of a rascal. My poor Venice! But you will see presently, only the fear is that our fire here may flash very far. In any case, it would not be desirable for Englishmen to come southwards this year. Our plans for the winter depend entirely on circumstances. If we can go to Rome in any reasonable security, I suppose we shall go. But I have no heart for plans just now.

Dear Isa Blagden is spending the summer in a rough *cabin*, a quarter of an hour's walk from here, and Mr. Landor is hard by in the lane. This (with the Storys a mile off) makes a sort of colonisation of the country here. Otherwise it's a solitude, 'very *triste*,' say the English, not even an English church, even in the city of Siena. We get books from Florence, and newspapers from everywhere, or one couldn't get on quite well. As it is I like it very much. I like the quiet! the lying at length on a sofa, in an absolute silence, nobody speaking for hours together (Robert rides a great deal), not a chance of morning visitors, no voices under the windows. The repose would help me much, if it were not that circumstances of pain and fear walk in upon me through windows and doors, using one's own thoughts, till they

tremble. Pen has had an abbé to teach him Latin, and his pony to ride on, and he and Robert are very well and strong, thank God.

Thank you for your words on spiritualism. I have not *yet* seen the last 'Cornhill.' It pleases me that Thackeray has had the courage to maintain the facts before the public; I think *much the better of him* for doing so. Owen's book I shall try to get. There is a weak reference to the subject in the 'Saturday Review' (against it), and I see an article advertised in 'Once a Week,' all proving that the public is awaking to a consideration of the class of phenomena. *Investigation* is all I desire. The 'Spiritual Magazine' lingers so this month that I fear, and Robert hopes, something may have happened to it.

On returning to Rome for the winter, which they did about September, the Brownings found quarters at 126 Via Felice. The following letter was written shortly after the death of Mrs. Browning's sister.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

[Rome: autumn 1860.]

In one word, my dearest Fanny, I will thank you for what is said and not said, for sympathy true and tender each way. It is a great privilege to be able to talk and cry; but *I cannot*, you know. I have suffered very much, and feel tired and beaten. Now, it's all being lived down; thrown behind or pushed before, as such things must be if we *are* to live: not forgetting, not feeling any tie slackened, loving unchangeably, and believing how mere a *line* this is to overstep between the living and the dead.

Do you know, the first thing from without which did me the least good was a letter from America, from dear Mrs. Stowe. Since we parted here in the spring, neither of us had written, and she had not the least idea of my being unhappy for any reason. In fact, her thought was to con-

gratulate me on public affairs (knowing how keenly I felt about them), but her letter dwelt at length upon spiritualism. She had heard, she said, for the fifth time from her boy (the one who was drowned in that awful manner through carrying out a college jest) without any seeking on her part. She gave me a minute account of a late manifestation, not seeming to have a doubt in respect to the verity and identity of the spirit. In fact, secret things were told, reference to private papers made, the evidence was considered most satisfying. And she says that all of the communications descriptive of the *state* of that Spirit, though coming from very different mediums (some high Calvinists and others low infidels) tallied exactly. She spoke very calmly about it, with no dogmatism, but with the strongest disposition to receive the facts of the subject with all their bearings, and at whatever loss of orthodoxy or sacrifice of reputation for common sense. I have a high appreciation of her power of forming opinions, let me add to this. It is one of the most vital and growing minds I ever knew. Besides the inventive, the critical and analytical faculties are strong with her. How many women do you know who are *religious*, and yet analyse point by point what they believe in? She lives in the midst of the traditional churches, and is full of reverence by nature; and yet if you knew how fearlessly that woman has torn up the old cerements and taken note of what is a dead letter within, yet preserved her faith in essential spiritual truth, you would feel more admiration for her than even for writing 'Uncle Tom.' There are quantities of irreverent women and men who profess infidelity. But this is a woman of another order, observe, devout yet brave in the outlook for truth, and considering, not whether a thing be *sound*, but whether it be true. Her views are Swedenborgian on some points, beyond him where he departs from orthodoxy on one or two points, adhering to the orthodox creed on certain others. She used to come to me last winter and open out to me very freely, and I was much

interested in the character of her intellect. Dr. Manning tried his converting power on her. 'It might have answered,' she said, 'if one side of her mind had not confuted what the other side was receptive of.' In fact, she caught at all the beauty and truth and good of the Roman Catholic symbolism, saw what was better in it than Protestantism, and also, just as clearly, what was worse. She admired Manning immensely, and was very keen and quick in all her admirations; had no national any more than ecclesiastical prejudices; didn't take up Anglo-Saxon outcries of superiority in morals and the rest, which makes me so sick from American and English mouths. By the way (I must tell Sarianna *that* for M. Milsand!) a clever Englishwoman (married to a Frenchman) told Robert the other day that she believed in 'a special hell for the Anglo-Saxon race on account of its hypocrisy.' . . .

Meanwhile you will care for Roman news, and I have not much to tell you. I am very much in my corner, and very quiet. Robert, who has been most dear and tender and considerate to me through my trial, kept all the people off, and even now, when the door is open a little, gloomy lionesses with wounded paws don't draw the public, I thank God, and I am not much teased, if at all. Sir John Bowring came with a letter of introduction, and intimate relations with Napoleon to talk of, and he has confirmed certain views of mine which I was glad to hear confirmed by a disciple of Bentham and true liberal of distinguished intelligence. He said that nothing could be more ludicrous and fanatical than the volunteer movement in England rising out of the most incredible panic which ever arose without a reason. I only hope that if the volunteers ever have to act indeed, they may behave better than at Naples, where they left the worst impression of English morals and discipline. They embarked to return home dead drunk all of them, and the drunkenness was not the worst. Sir John Bowring has been ill since he came, so perhaps he may go

before I see him again. Then Madame Swab [Schwabe], whom I slightly knew in Paris, has been with me to-day, talking on Italian affairs. There is room for anxiety about the Neapolitans; but don't believe in exaggerations: we shall do better than our enemies desire. There will be war probably. . . .

Robert has taken to modelling under Mr. Story (at his studio) and is making extraordinary progress, turning to account his studies on anatomy. He has copied already two busts, the Young Augustus and the Psyche, and is engaged on another, enchanted with his new trade, working six hours a day. In the evening he generally goes out as a bachelor — free from responsibility of crinoline — while I go early to bed, too happy to have him a little amused. In Florence he never goes anywhere, you know; even here this winter he has had too much gloom about him by far. But he looks entirely well — as does Penini. I am weak and languid. I struggle hard to live on. I wish to live just as long as and no longer than to grow in the soul.

May God bless you, dearest Fanny. Write.

America is making me very anxious just know. If they compromise in the north it is a moral death, but a merely physical dissolution of the States would be followed by a resurrection 'in honor,' and I should not fear. What are you painting?

Your affectionate as ever

Ba.

Did you see Lacordaire received? Those are things I care to see in Paris, wishing, however, to Guizot, the king of Prussia, and all prigs, the contempt they deserve.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, [Rome]:
Monday, [November–December 1860].

Ever dearest Isa, — How you grieve me by this news of your being unwell. Dear, I wondered at having no letter,

and now with the letter and all the proofs of your remembering me (newspaper and pens) comes the bad word of your being ill. . . .

I myself am not very well. I thought I was going to have a bad attack of the oppression, but this morning it seems to have almost gone, and without a blister! I had one night very bad. Probably a sudden call from the tramontana brought it; even frost we had. Only, on the whole, and considering accounts from other places, Rome has distinguished itself for mildness this year; and I hope I shall keep from bad attacks, having not much strength in body, nerve, or spirit to bear up resistingly against them. . . .

Sir John Bowring has been to see us. Yes, he speaks with great authority and conviction, and it carries the more emphasis because he is not without antigallican prejudice, I observed. He told me that the panic in England about invasion had reached, at one time, a point of phrenzy which would be scarcely credible to anyone who had not witnessed it. People were in terrors, expecting their houses to be burnt and sacked directly. Placards of the most inflammatory character, calling passionately on the riflemen to arm, arm, arm! He himself was hissed at Edinburgh for venturing to say that the rifle-locks would be very rusty if only used against invading Napoleons.

He told me that the Emperor's intentions towards Italy had been undeviatingly ignored, and that whatever had seemed equivocal had been misunderstood, or was the consequence of misunderstanding, or of the press of some otherwise great difficulty. The Italian question was only beginning to be understood in England. I said (in my sarcastic way) that at first they had seemed to understand it upside down. To which he replied that when, at the opening of the Revolution, he came over with several English officers from India, they were *all prepared* (in case England didn't fight on the Hapsburgh side) to enter the Austrian army as volunteers to help them to keep down Italy.

But men like Mr. Trollope find it easy to ignore all this. It is we who have done the most for Italy — we who did nothing! Yes, I admit so far. We abstained from helping the Austrians with an open force.

That now we wish well to the Italian cause is true, I hope, but, at best, it is a noble inconsistency; and that we should set up a claim to a nation's gratitude on these grounds seems to me worse than absurd. The more we are in earnest now, the more ashamed we should be for what has been.

I have been sorry about Gaeta;[1] but there is somewhere a cause, and, perhaps, not hard to find. That the Emperor is ready to do for Italy *whatever will not sacrifice France*, I am convinced more than ever. And even the Romans (who have benefited least) think so. One of the patriots here, a watchmaker, was saying to Ferdinando the other day that he had subscribed to Garibaldi's fund, and had given his name for Viterbo,[2] but that there was one man in whom he believed most, and never ceased to believe — Louis Napoleon. And this is the common feeling. Mr. Trollope said that they only ventured to unbosom themselves to the English. Now my belief is that the Italians seldom do this to the English, as far as Napoleon is concerned. The Italians are *furbi assai*, and wish to conciliate us, and are perfectly aware of our national jealousies. I myself have observed the difference in an Italian when

[1] Gaeta, the last remaining stronghold of the Neapolitan Government, was besieged by the Italian forces from November to January. During the first two months of the siege the French fleet prevented the Italians from operating against it by sea, and it was ultimately through the intervention of the English Government that Napoleon was persuaded to withdraw his ships.

[2] Viterbo had declared for the Italian government, but had been occupied by French troops on behalf of the Pope. Many of the inhabitants left it, and a body of Italian volunteers entered the country in support of them. It is presumably to this movement that the passage in the text refers.

speaking to my own husband before me and speaking to me alone.

Since we came here I have had a letter from Ruskin, written in a very desponding state about his work, and life, and the world. . . .

Life goes on heavily with me, but it goes on: it has rolled into the ruts again and goes. . . .

Write to me, my Isa, and love me.

I am your ever loving Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome: November–December [1860.]

. . . Now while I remember it let me tell you what I quite forgot yesterday. If through Kate's dealing with American papers you get to hear of a lyric of mine called 'De Profundis,'[1] you are to understand that it was written by me nearly twenty years ago, *before I knew Robert;* you will observe it is in my 'early manner,' as they say of painters. It is a personal poem, of course, but was written even so, in comparatively a state of retrospect, catching a grief in the rebound a little. (You know I never *can* speak or cry, so it isn't likely I should write verses.) The poem (written, however, when I was very low) lay unprinted all those years, till it turned up at Florence just when poor Mrs. Howard's bereavement and Mr. Beecher's funeral sermon in the 'Independent' suggested the thought of it — on which, by an impulse, I enclosed it to the editor, who wanted more verses from me. Now you see it comes out just when people will suppose the motive to be an actual occasion connected with myself. Don't let anyone think so, dear Isa. In the first place, there would be great

[1] *Poetical Works*, v. 3. The poem evidently refers to the loss of her brother Edward, but might be supposed (being published at this moment) to refer to the death of her sister Henrietta, shortly after which this letter was evidently written.

exaggeration; and in the second, it's not my way to grind up my green griefs to make bread of. But that poem exaggerates nothing — represents a condition from which the writer had already partly emerged, after the greatest suffering; the only time in which I have known what absolute *despair* is.

Don't notice this when you write.

Write. Take the love of us three. Yes, I love you, dearest Isa, and shall for ever.

Ba.

To Mrs. Martin

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Friday, [about December 1860].

I have not had courage to write, my dearest friend, but you will not have been severe on me. I have suffered very much — from suspense as well as from certainty. If I could open my heart to you it would please me that your sympathy should see all; but I can't write, and I couldn't speak of that. It is well for those who in their griefs *can* speak and write. I never could.

But to you after all it is not needful. You understand and have understood.

My husband has been very good to me, and saved me all he could, so that I have had solitude and quiet, and time to get into the ruts of the world again where one has to wheel on till the road ends. In this respect it has been an advantage being at Rome rather than Florence. Now I can read, and have seen a few faces. One must live; and the only way is to look away from oneself into the larger and higher circle of life in which the merely personal grief or joy forgets itself.

For the rest even I ought to have comfort, I know. I believe that love in its most human relations is an eternal thing. I do believe it, only through inconsistency and much weakness I falter.

Also there are other beliefs with me with regard to the spiritual world and the measuring of death, which ought, if I had ordinary logic, to rescue me from what people in general suffer in circumstances like these. Only I am weak and foolish; and when the tender past came back to me day by day, I have dropped down before it as one inconsolable.

Dearest Mr. Martin — give him my grateful love for every kind thought, and to yourself.

Now that page is turned.

I wish I knew that you were stronger, and at Pau. It is unfortunate that just on this bitter winter you have been unable to get away from England.

Here, though there was snow once, we have fared mildly as to climate. And our rooms are very warm. Penini has his pony and rides, and studies with his Abbé, and looks very rosy and well. I help him to prepare his lessons, but that is all, except hearing him read a little German now and then, and Robert sees to the music, and the getting up of the arithmetic. For the first time I have had pain in looking into his face lately — which you will understand.

I saw a man from Naples two days since, an Englishman of intelligence and impartiality, who has resided there for months in the heart of the politics. He told me that the exaggeration of evils was great. Evils there were certainly; and no government succeeding Garibaldi's could have satisfied a public trained to expect the impossible. Our poor Garibaldi, hero as he is, and an honest hero, is in truth the weakest and most malleable of men, and had become at last the mere mouthpiece of the Mazzinians. If the Bourbons' fall had not been a little delayed, north and south Italy would have broken in two. So I was assured by my friend, who gave reasons and showed facts.

That the Neapolitans are not equal to the other Italians is too plain; and if corrupt governments did not corrupt the government they would be less hateful to all of

us, of course. But a little time will give smoothness to the affairs of Italy, and none of my old hopes are in the meanwhile disturbed.

The design as to Rome seems to be to starve out the hope by the financial question; to let the rotten fruit fall at last as much by its own fault as possible, and by the gentlest shake of the tree. I hear of those who doubted most in the Emperor's designs beginning to confess that he can't mean ill by Italy.

Possibly you and dear Mr. Martin think more just now of America than of this country, which I can understand. The crisis has come earlier than anyone expected. It is a crisis; and if the north accepts such a compromise as has been proposed the nation perishes morally, which would be sadder than the mere dissolution of States, however sad. It is the difference between the death of the soul and of the body.

There might and ought to be a pecuniary compromise; but a compromise of principle would be fatal.

I am anxious that before we go too far with the Minghetti project here (separate administration of provinces) we should learn from America that a certain degree of centralisation (not carried out too far) is necessary to a strong and vital government. And Italy will want a strong government for some years to come. There is much talk of war in the spring, and if Austria will not cede Venetia war must be, even if she should satisfy her other provinces, which she will probably fail to do.

This is a dull lecture, but you will pardon it and me.

I know all your goodness and sympathy. Do not think that *I* think that *any bond is broken*, or that anything is lost. We have been fed on the hillside, and now there are twelve baskets full of fragments remaining.

May God bless you and love you both!

Your ever affectionate and grateful

BA.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, Rome: Tuesday, [January 1861].

Ever dearest Isa, — I wrote a long letter, which you have received, I do hope, and am waiting for a long one from you to tell me that you are not suffering any more. This is on business merely — that is, it is merely to give you trouble, the customary way for me to do business in these latter days. Will you, dear, without putting yourself to too much inconvenience by overhaste, direct the 'Nazione' people to send the journal, to which we must subscribe for three months, to *S. E. le Général Comte de Noue, Comandante della piazza di Roma. No other name.* The General, who can do what he pleases, pleases to receive our paper (our kind Abbé mediating) on condition that we do not talk of it, and so at last I shall attain to getting out of this dark into the free upper air. It is insufferable to be instructed by the 'Giornale di Roma' as to how Cialdini writes to Turin that his Piedmontese are perfectly demoralised, and that the besieged dance for triumph each time an Italian cannon is fired into the vague. On the other hand, I hear regularly every morning from the Romans that Gaeta is taken,[1] with the most minute particulars, which altogether is exasperating. The last rumour is of typhus fever in the fortress, but I have grown sceptical, and believe nothing on either side now. One thing is clear, that it wasn't only the French fleet which prevented our triumph. . . .

Robert came home this morning between three and four. A great ball at Mrs. Hooker's — magnificent, he says. All the princes in Rome (and even cardinals) present. The rooms are splendid, and the preparations were in the best taste. The princess Ruspoli (a Buonaparte) appeared in the tricolor. She is most beautiful, Robert says.

So you see our Americans can dance even while the

[1] Gaeta fell on January 15, 1861.

Republic goes to pieces. I think I would not do it. Not that I despair of America — God forbid! If the North will be faithful to its conscience there will be only an increase of greatness after a few years, even though it may rain blood betwixt then and now. Mr. Story takes it all very quietly. He would be content to let the South go, and accept the isolation of the North as final. 'We should do better without the South,' said he. I don't agree in this. I think that the unity of the State should be asserted with a strong hand, and the South forced to pay taxes and submit to law.

Mdme. Swab [Schwabe] told me that a friend of hers had travelled with Klapka from Constantinople, and that K. had said, 'there would not be war till next year, — diplomacy would take its course for the present year.' Perhaps he did not speak sincerely. I can't understand how the Austrian provinces will hold out in mere talk for twelve months more. Do you mark the tone of the 'Opinion Nationale' on Austria, and about Hungary being a natural ally of France, and also what is said in the 'Morning Chronicle,' which always more or less reflects the face of the French Government? Then it seems to me that the Emperor's speech is not eminently pacific, though he 'desires peace.' I hear from rather good authority what I hope is possible, that Teliki accepted as a condition of his liberation, not simply that he would not personally act against Austria, but that he would use his endeavours to prevent any action on the part of his compatriots. Men are base.

Mr. Prinsep[1] is here. Last autumn he made a walking tour into Cornwall with Alfred Tennyson, to tread in the steps of King Arthur. Tennyson was dreadfully afraid of being recognised and mobbed, and desired to be called 'the other gentleman,' which straightway became convertible now and then into 'the old gentleman,' much to his

[1] Mr. Val. Prinsep, R.A.

vexation. But Mr. Prinsep is in the roses and lilies of youth, and comparatively speaking, of course, the great Laureate was an ancient. He is in considerable trouble, too, by their building a fort in front of his house on the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. I couldn't help saying that he deserved it for having written 'Riflemen, arm!' It's a piece of pure poetical justice, really.

Here I end.

Write to me, my Isa, and do me good with your tender, warm thoughts. Do you think I have no comfort in feeling them stroke me softly through the dark and distance?

May God love you, dearest Isa!

Always your loving

Ba.

Robert's true love, and Pen's.

The weather is wonderfully warm. In fact, the winter has been very mild — milder than usual for even Rome.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Tuesday, [about January 1861].

You really astonish me, dearest Fanny, so much by your letter, that I must reply to it at once. I ask myself under what new influence (strictly clerical) is she now, that she should write so? And has she forgotten me, never read 'Aurora Leigh,' never heard of me or from me that, before 'Spiritualism' came up in America, I have been called orthodox by infidels, and heterodox by church-people; and gone on predicting to such persons as came near enough to me in speculative liberty of opinion to justify my speaking, that the present churches were in course of dissolution, and would have to be followed by a reconstruction of Christian essential verity into other than these middle-age scholastic forms. Believing in Christ's divinity, which is the life of Christianity, I believed this. Otherwise, if the end were here

— if we were to be covered over and tucked in with the Thirty-nine Articles or the like, and good-night to us for a sound sleep in 'sound doctrine' — I should fear for a revealed religion incapable of expansion according to the needs of man. What comes from God has life in it, and certainly from all the growth of living things, spiritual growth cannot be excepted. But I shun religious controversy — it is useless. I never 'disturb anybody's mind,' as it is called — let those sleep who can. If I had not known that *your* mind was broken up rather broadly by truths out of Swedenborg, I should not have mooted the subject, be sure. (Have you given up Swedenborg? this by the way.) Having done so, I am anxious to set you right about Mrs. Stowe. As the author of the most successful book printed by man or woman, perhaps I a little under-rated her. The book has genius, but did not strike *me* as it did some other readers. Her 'Sunny Memories,' I liked very little. When she came to us in Florence some years ago, I did not think I should like her, nor did Robert, but we were both of us surprised and charmed with her simplicity and earnestness. At Rome last year she brought her inner nature more in contact with mine, and I, who had looked for what one usually finds in women, was startled into much admiration and sympathy by finding in her a largeness and fearlessness of thought which, coming out of a clerical and puritan *cul-de-sac*, and combined with the most devout and reverent emotions, really is fine. So you think that since 'Uncle Tom' she has turned infidel, because of her interest in Spiritualism. Her last words to me when we parted, were, 'Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ never see one another for the last time.' That's the attitude of the mind which you stigmatise as corrupting.

With regard to 'Spiritualism,' so called, you might as well say '*books*' are dangerous, without specifying the books. Surely you *know* that every sort of doctrine is enjoined by these means, from Church of Englandism to Free Love. A

lady was with me this very morning, who was converted from infidelity to Christianity solely by these means, and I am told that thousands declare the same. As far as I am concerned, I never heard or read a single communication which impressed me in the least: what does impress me is the probability of there being communications at all. I look at the movement. What *are* these intelligences, separated yet relating and communicating? What is their state? what their aspiration? have we had part or shall we have part with them? is this the corollary of man's life on the earth? or are they unconscious echoes of his embodied soul? That anyone should admit a fact (such as a man being lifted into the air, for instance), and not be interested in it, is so foreign to the habits of my mind (which can't insulate a fact from an inference, and rest there) that I have not a word to say. Only I *see* that if this class of facts, however grotesque, be recognised among thinkers, our reigning philosophy will modify itself; scientific men will conceive differently from Humboldt (for instance) of the mystery of life; the materialism which stifles the higher instincts of men will be dislodged, and the rationalism which divides Oxford with Romanism (*nothing between*, we hear!) will receive a blow.

No truth can be dangerous. What if Jesus Christ be taken for a medium, do you say? Well, what then? As perfect man, He possessed, I conclude, the full complement of a man's faculties. But if He walked on the sea as a medium, if the virtue went out of Him as a mesmeriser, He also spoke the words which never man spoke, was born for us, and died for us, and rose from the dead as the Lord God our Saviour. But the whole theory of spiritualism, all the phenomena, are strikingly *confirmatory* of revelation; nothing strikes me more than that. Hume's argument against miracles (a strong argument) disappears before it, and Strauss's conclusions from *a priori* assertion of impossibility fall in pieces at once.

Now I have done with this subject. Upon the whole, it seems to me better really that you should not mix yourself up with it any more. Also I wish you joy of the dismissal of M. Pierart. There was no harm that he took away your headache, if he did not presume on that. You tell me not to bid you to beware of counting on us in Paris. And yet, dearest Fanny, I must. The future in this shifting world, what is it? As for me, whom you recognise as 'so much myself,' dear, I have a stout pen, and, till its last blot, it will write, perhaps, with its 'usual insolence' (as a friend once said), but if you laid your hand on this heart, you would feel how it stops, and staggers, and fails. I have not been out yet, and am languid in spirits, I gather myself up by fits and starts, and then fall back. Do you know, I think with positive terror sometimes, less of the journey than of having to speak and look at people. If it were possible to persuade Robert, I should send him with Pen; but he wouldn't go alone, and he must go this year. Oh, I daresay I shall feel more up to the friction of things when once I have been out; it's stupid to give way. Also my sister Arabel talks of meeting me in France, though I might have managed that difficulty, but that Robert should see his father is absolutely necessary. Meanwhile we don't talk of it, and by May or June I shall be feeling another woman probably. . . .

So you are going to work hard in Germany: that is well. Only beware of the English periodicals. There's a rage for new periodicals, and because the 'Cornhill' answers, other speculations crowd the market, overcrowd it: there will be failures presently.

I have written a long letter when I meant to write a short one. May God keep you and love you, and make you happy. Your ever affectionate

BA.

I am anxious about America, fearing a compromise in the North. All other dangers are comparatively null.

To Miss E. F. Haworth

126 Via Felice, Rome:
Saturday, [about January 1861].

Ah, dearest Fanny, I can't rest without telling you that I am sorry at your receiving such an impression from my letter. May God save me from such a sin as arrogance. I have not generally a temptation to it, through knowing too well what I am myself. At the same time, I do not dispute my belief in what you have so often confessed, that you don't hold your attainments and opinions sufficiently 'irrespectively of persons.' Believing which of you, I said, 'under what new influence?' and if I said anything with too much vivacity, forgive me with that sweetness of nature which is at least as characteristic of you as the intellectual impressionability. Really I would not wound you for the world — but I myself perhaps may have been over-excitable, irritable just then, who knows? and, in fact, I *was* considerably vexed at the moment that, from anything said by me, you would infer what was so injurious and unjust to a woman like Mrs. Stowe. I named her in this relation because she struck me as a remarkable example of the compatibility of freedom of thought with reverence of sentiment. You generally get one or the other; the one excluding the other. I never considered her a deep thinker, but singularly large and unshackled, considering the associations of her life, she certainly is. When I hinted at her stepping beyond Swedenborg in certain of her ideas, I referred to her belief that the process called 'regeneration' may *commence* in certain cases beyond the grave, and in her leaning to universal salvation views, which you don't get at through Swedenborg.

For the rest, I don't think, if you will allow of my saying so, that you apprehend Swedenborg's meaning very accurately always. If Swedenborg saw sin and danger in

certain communications, for instance, why did he consider it privilege on his own part to live in the world of spirits as he did. True, he spoke of 'danger,' but it was to those who, themselves weak and unclean, did not hold 'by the Lord.' He distinctly said that in the first unfallen churches there was incessant communion, and that the 'new church,' as it grew, would approximate more and more to that earlier condition. There is a distinct prospect given in Swedenborg of an increasing aptitude in the bodies and souls of men towards communication with the Disembodied. I consider that he foresaw not only what we are seeing (if these manifestations be veritable) but greater and more frequent phenomena of the same class, — which does not in any way exclude considerable danger to some persons in the meanwhile. And do you think I doubt *that?* No indeed. Unsettled minds, especially when under affliction, will lose their balance at moments, — there is danger. It is not the occasion for passion and fanaticism of sentiment, but for calm and reasonable inquiry into facts. Let us establish the facts first, and then '*try the spirits*' as the apostle directs; afterwards remains the difficulty of assuring oneself of the personalities. I don't think you should complain of the subject being unsatisfactory to you, because you don't get 'a sublime communication,' or a characteristic evidence of some spirit known to you. Much less would satisfy *me*. But it seemed to me that the consideration of the subject disturbed you, made you uncomfortable, and that you didn't approach any conclusion, and with that impression and not because of 'contempt,' be sure, I advised you to let it rest. Why should we beat our heads against an obstacle which we can't walk through? Then your liability to influence is against you here as much as your attraction towards such high speculations is in your favour. You have an 'open mind,' yes, but you leave all the doors open, and you let people come in every now and then, and lock them, and keep them locked as long as said people stand by. The

teachings of Spiritualism are much like the teachings in the world. There are excellent things taught, and iniquitous things taught. Only the sublime communications are, as far as I know, decidedly absent. Swedenborg directs you to give no more weight to what is said by a spirit-man than by a man in the body, and there's room for the instruction. 'Heralds of Progress' on one side, 'Heralds of Light' on the other, if a right thing is said, 'judge ye.' If infidels are here, there are devout, yes, and very orthodox Christians there.

I beg to say that when I speak of 'old cerements' being put off, I pre-suppose a living body in resurrection. Also, I don't call *marriage*, for instance, an old cerement. We must distinguish. With regard to the common notion of a 'hell,' as you ask me, I don't believe in it. I don't believe in any such thing as arbitrary reward or punishment, but in consequences and logical results. That seems to me God's way of working. The scriptural phrases are simply symbolical, it seems to me, and Swedenborg helps you past the symbol. Then as to the Redemption and its mode — let us receive the thing simply. Dr. Adam Clarke, whose piety was never doubted, used to say, 'Vicarious suffering is vicarious nonsense.' Which does not hinder the fact that the suffering of the Lord was necessary, in order that we should not suffer, and that through His work and incarnation His worlds recovered the possibility of good. It comes to the same thing. The manner in which preachers analyse the Infinite, pass the Divine through a sieve, has ceased to be endurable to thinking men. You speak of Luther. We all speak of Luther. Did you ever *read* any of his theological treatises. He was a schoolman of the most scholastic sect; most offensive, most absurd, presenting my idea of 'old cerements' to the uttermost. We are entering on a Reformation far more interior than Luther's; and the misfortune is, that if we don't enter, we must drop under the lintel. Do you hear of the storms in England about 'Essays and

Reviews?' I have seen the book simply by reviews in abstract and extract. I should agree with the writers in certain things, but certainly not in all. I have no sort of sympathy with what is called 'rationalism,' which is positivism in a form. The vulgar idea of miracles being put into solution, leaves you with the higher law and spiritual causation; which the rationalists deny, and which you and I hold faithfully. But whatever one holds, free discussion has become necessary. That it is full of danger; that in consequence of it, many minds will fall into infidelity, doubt, and despair, is certain; but through this moral crisis men must pass, or the end will be worse still. That's my belief, I have seen it coming for years back.

'The hungry flock looks up and is not fed,' except with chopped hay of the schools. Go into any church in England, or out of England, and you hear men preaching 'in pattens,' walking gingerly, lest a speck of natural moisture touch a stocking; seeking what's 'sound,' not what's 'true.' Now if only on theology they must not think, there will be soon a close for theologians. Educated men disbelieve to a degree quite unsuspected. That, I know of knowledge.

No! Swedenborg does not hold the existence of *devils* in the ordinary meaning. Spiritual temptation comes, he says, through disembodied corrupt spirits, out of this or *other earths*. The word Satan, remember, he conceives to represent a company of such evil spirits.

Now in what spirit have I written all this? Gently, this time, I do hope. If you knew in what an agonised state of humiliation I am sometimes, you would not suspect me of 'despising' you? Oh no, indeed. But I am much in earnest, and can't 'prophesy smooth things,' at moments of strong conviction. Who can?

Indeed, indeed, yes. I am very anxious about what passes in Paris. Do you know that Keller's infamous discourse was *corrected by Guizot's own hand?* Mr. Pentland

(who was with the Prince of Wales) knows G. and this. He (P) has just come from Paris. He knows the 'sommités' there, and considers that though there is danger, yet on the whole the Emperor dominates the situation. Prince N.'s speech, in its general outline, was submitted to the E. and had his full sympathy, *Persigny said to* P. or in his presence. Let no one ever speak ill of Prince N. before me; I read all the seventeen columns in the 'Moniteur,' and most magnificent was the discourse. Rome is greatly excited, but hopeful. There may be delay, however.

Surely you don't think the large head of Robert bad. Why, it is exquisite. . . . I can't read over, and send this scratch that you may pardon me before you go (not to lose the post).

Sarianna says that Squires carries about his own table. In which case, I give him up. Don't *you* write.

To Miss I. Blagden

126 Via Felice, [Rome: early in 1861].

Dearest dear Isa, — We don't get the paper. Will you ask why? Here's a special address enclosed.

I have just heard from what seems excellent authority (*F. P.* Zanetti has been here) that a French company is to be withdrawn from Rome to-day, and that *all* the troops will be immediately withdrawn from the R.S., except Rome and Civita Vecchia. The French generals, however, were not aware of this yesterday morning, though prepared for much, and thus I can't help a certain scepticism. There is an impression in French quarters, that the delay arises from a fear of a '*coup*' on the part of Austria, if she didn't see France hereabouts. But Gorgon means to try to get away before the crisis, which isn't in his tastes at all. De Noue has gone — went yesterday.

I heard yesterday of Sir John Bowring telling somebody

that '*the time* had resolved itself now into an affair of *days*.' Still, there are people I suppose who hold fast their opinions of the antique form, like Mr. Massy Dawson, for instance, who called on me yesterday with moustaches and a bride, but otherwise unchanged. He still maintains that Napoleon will perish in defence of the papacy, and that (from first to last) he has been thwarted in Italy. 'I know that Sir John Bowring, Diomed Pantaleone, Mrs. Browning' (bowing graciously to me in that complimentary frame of body which befits disputants with female creatures) 'and other persons better informed than I am, think differently. And, in fact, if I looked only *at facts* and at the worldly circumstances of the case, I should agree with you all. But reading the "Apocalypse" as I do, I find myself before a fixed conclusion!' Imagine this, dearest Isa mine, his bride sitting in a delicate dove-coloured silk on the sofa, as tame as any dove, and not venturing to coo even. I suppose she thought it quite satisfactory. What a woman with a brain could be made to suffer under certain casualties! He quoted simply St. John and Mr. Kinglake! Mr. Kinglake plainly running a little with St. John. 'Wasn't he (Kinglake) a member of Parliament, and a lawyer?' And if his allegation wasn't true, and if Napoleon did not propose to Francis Joseph to swap Lombardy for the Rhine provinces, why was there no contradiction on the part of the French Emperor?

Now do mark the necessity of Napoleon's saying, 'I didn't really pick Mr. Jones's pocket of his best foulard last Monday — no, though it hung out a tempting end. Pray don't let the volunteers think so ill of me.'

That would have been '*like*' our Emperor — wouldn't it?

By the way, I had yesterday a crowd of people, and all at once, so that I was in a flutter of weakness, and didn't get over it quickly. Mrs. Bruen brought Miss Sewell (Amy Herbert) and Lady Juliana Knox, whom Annunziata takes in as a homœopathic dose, 'È molto curioso questo cognome,

precisamente come la medicina — *nux* (tale quale).' She (Lady Juliana) had just been presented to the Pope, just before his illness, and was much touched, when at the close of the reception of indiscriminately Catholics and Protestants, he prayed a simple prayer in French and gave them all his benediction, ending in a sad humble voice, '*Priez pour le pape*.'

It *was* touching — was it not? Poor old man! When you feel the human flesh through the ecclesiastical robe, you get into sympathy with him at once.

Miss Sewell will come and see me again, she promised, and then I shall talk with her more. I couldn't get at her through the people yesterday. She is very nice, gentle-looking, cheerful, respectable sort of — single-womanish person (decidedly single) of the olden type; very small, slim, quiet, with the nearest approach to a poky bonnet possible in this sinful generation. I, in my confusion, did not glance at her petticoats, but, judging *a priori*, I should predicate a natural incompatibility with crinoline. But really I liked her, liked her. There were gentleness, humility and conscience — three great gifts. Of course we can touch only on remote points; but I hope (for my own sake) we may touch on these, and another day I mean to try. She said one thing which I liked. Speaking of convents, she 'considered that women must deteriorate by any separation from men.' Now that's not only true, but it is not on the surface of things as seen from her standpoint.

I had a visit a day ago from M. Carl Grün, a Prussian, with a letter of introduction from Dall' Ongaro. I feel a real regard and liking for Dall' Ongaro, and would welcome any friend of his. No — my Isa. I would prefer him as my translator to any 'young lady of twenty.' Heavens, never whisper it to the Marchesa, but I confide to you that my blood ran cold at that thought. I know what poets of

twenty must in all probability be — Dall' Ongaro *is* a poet, and has a remarkable command of language.

I have tried my hand at turning into literal Italian prose (only marking the lines) a lyric on Rome sent lately to America; and I may show it to you one of these days.

Now I must send off this. In tender love.

Your Ba.

To Miss I. Blagden

[Rome,] 126 Via Felice : March 20, [1861].

. . . Let me answer your questions concerning *Non Pio V.E.* Se non vero, ben trovato. Very happy, and I hope true. Probably enough it may be true, though I never heard it but from you. There was a banner with 'Viva Pio IX.' on one side, and 'Viva V.E. re d' Italia' on the other — that's true. And various devices we have had, miraculous rains of revolutionary placards among the rest. The French have taken to 'protect' our demonstrations here, half by way of keeping them under, perhaps — although the sympathy between the people and the troops (Gorgon apart) has been always undeniable. You know there was to be a gigantic demonstration to meet the declaration in the North. It was fixed to spread itself over three days. The French politely begged the 'papalini' to keep out of sight, and then they marched with the Roman demonstration for two days — twenty thousand Romans gathered together, I hear from those who were there, the greatest order observed — tricolors insinuated into the costume of all the women. After a certain time, French officer turns round and addresses the populace 'Gioventù Romana, basta cosi. Adesso bisogna andare à casa, poichè mi farebbe grandissimo dispiacere d' aprire ad alcuno la strada delle carceri.' The last words said smiling — as words to the wise. 'Grazie, grazie, grazie' were replied on all sides, and the people dispersed in the best humour possible. Yesterday (San Giuseppe) we were

to have had it repeated, but it rained hard, which was fortunate, perhaps; and I hear something of cannons being placed in evidence, and of Gorgon saying 'de haute voix' that he couldn't allow it to go on. But everybody understands Gorgon. He has certainly, up to a point, papal sympathies, and is as tender as he dares be to the Holy Father, and the irritation and wrath of the priestly party is naturally great. On the other hand, the whole body of French troops and their officers are as much vexed by Gorgon as Gorgon can vex me, and there's fraternisation with the Romans to an extraordinary degree.

Penini came home three days ago in a state of ecstasy. 'No — he never had been so happy in all his life. Oh mama, I *am* so happy!' What had happened, I asked. Why, Pen, being on the Pincio, had fallen on the French troops, had pushed through, and heard 'l'ordre du jour' read, had made friends with 'ever so many captains,' had marched in the ranks round the Pincio and into the *caserne*, had talked a great deal about Chopin, Stephen Heller, &c., with musical officers, and most about politics, and had been good-naturedly brought back to our door because he was 'too little to come alone through the crowd.' What had they not told him? Such things about Italy. 'They hoped,' said Pen, 'that *I would not think* they were like the Papalini. No indeed. They hoped I knew the French were different quite; and that, though they protected the Holy Father, they certainly didn't mean to fight for him. What *they* wanted was V.E. King of Italy. *Napoleon veut l'Italie libre.* I was to *understand that, and remember it.*' The attention, and the desire to conciliate Pen's good opinion, had perfectly turned the child's head. It will be 'dearest Napoleon' more than ever. Of course, he had invited the officers to 'come in and see mama,' only they were too discreet for this.

Pantaleone is exiled — ordered to go in eight days, three of which are passed. He is still in hopes of gaining more time, but the Pope is said to be resolutely set against him.

I am very sorry, not surprised. He told Robert yesterday, that nothing can be surer than that Napoleon has been throughout a true friend to Italy. Which is a good deal for a man to admit who began with all the irritation against Napoleon of a Roman of 1849. Even after the war, through Villafranca, the bad feeling returned, and as he lives so much among the English, it was only natural that he should receive certain influences. He is with Odo Russell (who calls him Pant) nearly every day, and Mr. Cartwright is very intimate with him besides. But P. is above all things Italian, and the Italian of the most *incisive* intellect I ever talked with. He praises Lord John.

To Miss Browning

[Rome,] [end of March] 1861 [postmark].

We take ourselves to be dismally aggrieved, ever dearest Sarianna, by your criticisms on our photographs. After deep reflection I can't help feeling sure (against Robert's impression) that he sent you — not the right one, but one which has undeniably a certain 'grin.' I prevail with him to let you have the *two-third likeness* this time, in order to decide the point. If you keep your opinion, why then all artistic Rome is against you without exception. Nobody likes the sepia-coloured thing of last year in comparison. Every album in Rome gives up its dead and insists on the new likeness — not only is it considered more like, but so infinitely superior in expression and poetical *convenance*, that it *ought* to be more like. So everybody thinks. With regard to the head, I am of opinion that the head is beautiful, and the eyes singularly full of expression for photographed eyes, but there may be more difference of opinion about the head. The *two-third view* you certainly can't have seen. Why, we had even resolved (as we couldn't hope to grow younger) to stand or fall with posterity by this production. 'Ecco!'

As to age — no! it's cruel of you to talk so. Robert's beard was tolerably white when he was in Paris last, and, in fact, his moustache is less so than the rest, therefore there can't be, and isn't in this respect, so rapid a 'decline and fall' in his appearance. The clipping of the side whiskers, which are very grey, is an advantage, and as to the hair, it is by no means cut short. 'Like an *épicier?*' No indeed. The *épicier* is bushy and curly about the ears (see an example in 'Galignani'), and moreover will keep the colour of the curl 'if he dyes for it' — an extremity to which Robert and I will never be driven — having too much the fear of attentive friends and affectionate biographers before our eyes — as suggested by poor Balzac's. But Robert is looking remarkably well and young — in spite of all lunar lights in his hair. Though my hair keeps darker (with a certain sprinkle however, underneath which forces its way outwards, I would willingly change on the whole with him, if he were not my own Robert. He is not thin or worn, as I am — no indeed — and the women adore him everywhere far too much for decency. In my own opinion he is infinitely handsomer and more attractive than when I saw him first, sixteen years ago — which does not mean as much as you may suppose, that I myself am superannuated and wholly anile, and incompetent therefore for judgment. No, indeed, I believe people in general would think the same exactly. And as to the modelling — well, I told you that I grudged a little the time from his own particular art — and that is true. But it does not do to dishearten him about his modelling. He has given a great deal of time to anatomy with reference to the expression of form, and the clay is only the new medium which takes the place of drawing. Also, Robert is peculiar in his ways of work as a poet. I have struggled a little with him on this point — for I don't think him right — that is to say, it wouldn't be right for me — and I heard the other day that it wouldn't be right for Tennyson. Tennyson is a regular worker, shuts himself

up daily for so many hours. And we are generally so made that a regular hour is good, even for so uncertain an influence as mesmerism. But Robert waits for an inclination — works by fits and starts — he can't do otherwise he says.[1] Then reading hurts him. As long as I have known him he has not been able to read long at a time — he can do it now better than in the beginning of time. The consequence of which is that he wants occupation and that an active occupation is salvation to him with his irritable nerves, saves him from ruminating bitter cud, and from the process which I call beating his dear head against the wall till it is bruised, simply because he sees a fly there, magnified by his own two eyes almost indefinitely into some Saurian monster. He has an enormous superfluity of vital energy, and if it isn't employed, it strikes its fangs into him. He gets out of spirits as he was at Havre. Nobody understands exactly why — except me who am in the inside of him and hear him breathe. For the peculiarity of our relation is, that even when he's displeased with me, he thinks aloud with me and can't stop himself. And I know ultimately that whatever takes him out of a certain circle (where habits of introvision and analysis of fly-legs are morbidly exercised), is life and joy to him. I wanted his poems done this winter very much — and here was a bright room with three windows consecrated to use. But he had a room all last summer, and did nothing. Then, he worked himself out by riding for three or four hours together — there has been little poetry done since last winter, when he did much. He was not inclined to write this winter. The modelling combines body-work and soul-work, and the more tired he has been, and the more his back ached, poor fellow, the more he has exulted and been happy — '*no, nothing ever made him so happy before*' — also the better he has looked and the stouter grown. So I couldn't be much in opposition against the

[1] Mrs. Orr's *Life* shows that this was only a temporary phase. In later life, especially, he was very regular in his hours of poetical work.

sculpture — I couldn't, in fact, at all. He has the material for a volume, and will work at it this summer, he says. His power is much in advance of Strafford, which is his poorest work of all. Oh, the brain stratifies and matures creatively, even in the pauses of the pen.

At the same time his treatment in England affects him naturally — and for my part I set it down as an infamy of that public — no other word. He says he has told you some things you had not heard, and which, I acknowledge, I always try to prevent him from repeating to anyone. I wonder if he has told you besides (no, I fancy not) that an English lady of rank, *an acquaintance of ours* (observe that !) asked, the other day, the American Minister whether 'Robert was not an American.' The Minister answered 'Is it possible that *you* ask me *this ?* Why, there is not so poor a village in the United States where they would not tell you that Robert Browning was an Englishman, and that they were very sorry he was not an American.' Very pretty of the American Minister — was it not? — and literally true besides.

I have been meditating, Sarianna, dear, whether we might not make our summer out at Fontainebleau in the picturesque part of the forest. It would be quiet, and not very dear. And we might dine together and take hands as at Havre — for we will all insist on Robert's doing the hospitality. I confess to shrinking a good deal about the noise of Paris — we might try Paris later. What do you say? The sea is so very far — it is such a journey — it looks so to me just now. And the south of France is very hot — as hot as Italy — besides making you pay greatly 'for your whistle.' Switzerland would increase both expenses and journey for everybody. Fontainebleau is said to be delicious in the summer, and if you don't mind losing your sea bathing, it might answer. Arabel wants me to go to England, but as *I did not last year* my heart and nerves revolt from it now. Besides, we belong to the nonno and you this summer.

Arabel can and, I dare say, will join us. And Milsand? You say 'once in three years.' Not quite *so*, I think. In any case, it has been far worse with some of mine. All the days of the three times of meeting in fourteen years, can only be multiplied together into *three weeks;* and this after a life of close union! Also, it was not *her* fault — she had not pecuniary means. I am bitter against myself for not having gone to England for a week or two in the Havre year. I could have done it, Robert would have let me. But now, no more. It was the war the year before last, and my unsteadiness of health last year, which kept us from our usual visit to you. This time we shall come.

Only we shall avoid the Alps, coming and going, out of prudence. Then, for next winter, we return to Rome. . . .

Why do you believe all the small gossip set in movement by the Emperor's enemies, in Paris, against his friends, as in foreign countries against himself? It's a league of lies against him and his. 'Intriguing lacqueys.' That's a sweeping phrase for all persons of distinction in France, except members of the Opposition. That men like De Morny and Waleski may speculate unduly I don't doubt, but even the 'Times' says now that these things have been probably exaggerated. I have heard great good of both these men. As to Prince Napoleon, he has spoken like a man and a prince. We are at his feet here in Italy. Tell our dear friend Milsand that I read the seventeen columns of the speech in the 'Moniteur.' Robert said 'magnificent.' I had tears in my eyes. There may have been fault in the P.'s private life — and may be still. Where is a clean man? But for the rest, he has done and spoken worthily — and what is better, we have reason to believe here that the Emperor sympathises with him wholly. Odo Russell knows the Prince — says that he is 'pétillant d'esprit' and has great weight with the Emperor.

[*The remainder of this letter is missing.*]

To Mrs. Martin

[Rome,] 126 Via Felice: [April 1861].

[My] very dear friends, how am I to thank [you] both? I receive the photograph with a heart running over. It is perfect. Never could a likeness be more satisfactory. It is himself. Form, expression, the whole man and soul, on which years cannot leave the least dint of a tooth. The youthfulness is extraordinary. We are all crying out against our 'black lines' (laying them all to the sun of course!) and even pretty women of our acquaintance in Rome come out with some twenty years additional on their heads, to their great dissatisfaction. But my dear Mr. Martin is my dear Mr. Martin still, unblacked, unchanged, as when I knew him in the sun long ago, when suns were content to make funny places, instead of drawing pictures! How good of dearest Mrs. Martin (it was she, I think!) to send this to me! I wish she (or he) had sent me hers besides. (How grasping some of us are!)

Then she sent me a short time since a book for my Peni, which he seized on with blazing eyes and an exclamation, 'Oh, what fun!' A work by his great author, Mayne Reid, who outshines all other authors, unless it's Robinson Crusoe, who, of course, wrote his own life. It was so very very good of you. Robert had repeatedly tried in Rome to buy a new volume of Mayne Reid for the child, and never could get one. Our drawback in Rome relates to books. We subscribe to a French library (not good) and snatch at accidental 'waifs,' and then the newspapers (which I intrigue about, and get smuggled through the courteous hands of French generals) are absorbing enough.

I had a letter from George yesterday with good news of dearest Mrs. Martin. May it be true. But I can't understand whether you have spent this year in Devonshire or Worcestershire, or where. The thick gloom of it is over

now, yet I find myself full of regrets. It's so hard to have to get out into the workday world, daylight, open air and all, and there's a duty on me to go to France, that Robert may see his father. You would pity me if you could see how I dread it. Arabel will meet me, and spend at least the summer with us, probably in the neighbourhood of Paris, and after just the first, we — even I — may be the happier. Don't tell anyone that I feel so. I should like to go into a cave for the year. Not that I haven't taken to work again, and to my old interests in politics. One doesn't quite rot in one's selfishness, after all. In fact, I think of myself as little as possible; it's the only way to bear life, to throw oneself out of the personal.

And my Italy goes on well in spite of some Neapolitan troubles, which are exaggerated, I can certify to you. Rome, according to my information as well as my instincts, approaches the crisis we desire. In respect to Venetia, we may (perhaps must) have a struggle for it, which might have been unnecessary if England had frankly accepted co-action with France, instead of doing a little liberalism and a great deal of suspicion on her own account. As it is, there's an impression in Europe that considerations about the East (to say nothing of the Ionian Islands) will be stronger than Vattel, and forbid our throwing over our 'natural ally' for the sake of our 'natural enemy.'

I am sure you must have been anxious lately on account of America. There seems to be a good deal of weakness, even on the part of Lincoln, who, if he had not the means of defending Fort Sumter and maintaining the Union, should not have spoken as he did. Not that it may not be as well to let the Southern States secede. Perhaps better so. What I feared most was that the North would compromise; and I fear still that they are not heroically strong on their legs on the *moral question*. I fear it much. If they can but hold up it will be noble.

We remain here (where we have had the mildest of

winters) till somewhat late in May, when we go to Florence for a week or two on our way to Paris.

You see my Emperor is 'crowning the edifice';[1] it is the beginning. Sir John Bowring says that the more liberty he can give, the better he will like it. *He told Sir John so.*

Is it right and loyal meanwhile of Guizot and his party to oppose the empire by upholding the enemies of Italy? I ask you. Such things I hear from Paris! Guizot corrected Keller's speech with his own hand.

May God bless you. Pen's love and gratitude. If Robert was here he would be named. Love me and think of me a little.

Your ever affectionate and grateful

Ba.

To Miss Browning

[Rome]: May 11, 1861 (postmark).

Your account of the dearest nonno was very pleasant on the whole, only, of course, you will be very careful with him. And then, dearest Sarianna, you yourself have not been well. The grippe seems to have been bitter against you. This is the time of year when it generally rages, and even Pen has had a small cough, which makes me austere about hours. In fact, the weather in the north has reverberated here, and we have paid for our mild winter by a considerable lingering of cold wind, from snow on the mountains, they say. As for me, it's much to my disadvantage in getting air and strength. I hope you are quite well again, as is Pen, and that the loved nonno is as strong as he ever

[1] It is curious that these are the very words which (as a translation from the Greek) Robert Browning used ten years later as the motto of his study of Louis Napoleon in 'Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau'; but the 'crowning' was of a very different kind then.

> 'Attempting one more labour, in a trice,
> Alack, *with ills I crowned the edifice.*'

was. Do you get good wine for him? The vintages are said to have suffered (which grieves me for poor dear Milsand) from the frost. We hear of travellers in snow-storms through England, where the cold has been great, and that in Paris, too, there has been snow. I do hope the opening summer will not copy the last.

Dearest Sarianna, try to find out if Fontainebleau is damp, because I was assured the other day that it was, besides being subject to intense heats. Also, will you see if there is a completed railroad to Trouville? Robert denies that sea-air ever disagrees with him (sea-*bathing* does), and it may be good for you and for Pen, to say nothing of Arabel, who is coming in the course of the summer. The objection is the journey, but if the railroad is there, it would not prolong the journey (in relation to Fontainebleau) more than two or three hours, if so much, would it? We ought to inquire a little beforehand. We shall get to you as early as we can. The weather is against us everywhere. We shall cut Florence quite short. By the way, we have the satisfaction of seeing a precipitation of the Tuscan funds down, down, which only makes Robert wish for more power of 'buying in,' causing the eyes of a Florentine Frescobaldi to open in wonder at so much audacity. But Robert, generally so timid in such things, has caught a flush of my rashness, and is alarmed by neither sinking funds nor rising loans. We have a strong faith in Italy — *Italia fatta* — particularly since that grand child, Garibaldi, has turned good again. The troubles in the Neapolitan States are exaggerated, are perilous even so, and I dare say Milsand thinks we are all going to pieces, but *we shall not;* there are great men here, and there will be a great nation presently. An Australian Englishman, very acute, and free from the political faults (as I see them) of England, did all he could to prepare me for failure in Italy, 'to save my heart from breaking,' as he said. And we have had drawbacks since then, yet my hope remains as strong.

The Duchesse de Grammont (French Embassy) sent us a card for Penini — 'matinée d'enfants' — and he went, and was rather proud of being received under a full-length portrait of Napoleon, who is as dear as ever to him. It was a very splendid affair, quite royal. Pen wore a crimson velvet blouse, and was presented to various small Italian princes, Colonnas, Dorias, Piombinos, and had the honor of talking ponies and lessons and playing leap-frog with them. The ambassador's own boy, the little Grammont, has a pony 'tale quale' like Pen's, only superannuated rather, which gives us the advantage. . . .

I wonder if he will confide to you his tender admiration for the young queen of Naples, whom, between you and me, he pursues, and receives in return ever so many smiles from that sad lovely face. When charged with a love affair, Pen answered gravely, that he 'did feel a kind of *interest*.' He told us that two days since she stood up in her carriage three times to smile at him. Something, it may be for the pony's sake; but also, Pen confessed, to an impression that his new jacket attracted! Fancy little Pen! Robert says she is very pretty, and for Pen (who makes it a point of conscience to consider the whole 'razza' of Bourbons and Papalini as 'questi infami *birboni*') to be so drawn, there must be a charm. After all, poor little creature, she acted heroically from her point of sight, and if the king had minded her, he would have made liberal concessions *in time* perhaps. The wretched queen-mother and herself were at daggers drawn from the beginning.

I hear that Jessie Mario and her husband have been taken up at Ferrara. They were *only* going to begin the war with Austria on their own account. Mazzini deserves what I should be sorry to inflict. He is a man without conscience. And that's no reason why Jessie and her party should use him for *theirs*. Mario is only the husband of his wife.

Robert has brought me home a most perfect copy of a

small torso of Venus — from the Greek — in the clay. It is wonderfully done, say the learned. He says 'all his happiness lies in clay now'; *that* was his speech to me this morning. *Not* a compliment, but said so sincerely and fervently, that I could not but sympathise and wish him a life-load of clay to riot in. It's the mixture of physical and intellectual effort which makes the attraction, I imagine. Certainly he is very well and very gay.

I am happy to see that the 'North British Quarterly' has an article on him. That gives hope for England. Thackeray has turned me out of the 'Cornhill' for indecency, but did it so prettily and kindly that I, who am forgiving, sent him another poem. He says that plain words permitted on Sundays must not be spoken on Mondays in England, and also that his 'Magazine is for babes and sucklings.' (I thought it was for the volunteers.)

May God bless you, dearest Sarianna and nonno. Pen's love.

The incident alluded to in the last paragraph deserves fuller mention, for the credit it does to both parties concerned in it. The letters that passed between Thackeray and Mrs. Browning on the subject have been given by Mrs. Richmond Ritchie in the 'Cornhill Magazine' for July 1896, from which I am allowed to quote them. Mrs. Browning, in reply to a request from Thackeray for contributions to the then newly established 'Cornhill,' had sent him, among other poems, 'Lord Walter's Wife,'[1] of which, though the moral is unimpeachable, the subject is not absolutely *virginibus puerisque*. The editor, in this difficulty, wrote the following admirable letter: —

[1] *Poetical Works*, iv. 252.

W. M. Thackeray to Mrs. Browning

36 Onslow Square: April 2, 1861.

My dear, kind Mrs. Browning, — Has Browning ever had an aching tooth which must come out (I don't say *Mrs.* Browning, for women are much more courageous) — a tooth which must come out, and which he has kept for months and months away from the dentist? I have had such a tooth a long time, and have sate down in this chair, and never had the courage to undergo the pull.

This tooth is an allegory (I mean *this* one). It's your poem that you sent me months ago, and who am I to refuse the poems of Elizabeth Browning and set myself up as a judge over her? I can't tell you how often I have been going to write and have failed. You see that our Magazine is written not only for men and women but for boys, girls, infants, sucklings almost, and one of the best wives, mothers, women in the world writes some verses which I feel certain would be objected to by many of our readers. Not that the writer is not pure, and the moral most pure, chaste, and right, but there are things *my* squeamish public will not hear on Monday, though on Sundays they listen to them without scruple. In your poem, you know, there is an account of unlawful passion, felt by a man for a woman, and though you write pure doctrine, and real modesty, and pure ethics, I am sure our readers would make an outcry, and so I have not published this poem.

To have to say no to my betters is one of the hardest duties I have, but I'm sure we must not publish your verses, and I go down on my knees before cutting my victim's head off, and say, 'Madam, you know how I respect and regard you, Browning's wife and Penini's mother; and for what I am going to do I most humbly ask your pardon.'

My girls send their very best regards and remembrances, and I am, dear Mrs. Browning, Always yours,

W. M. THACKERAY.

Mrs. Browning's answer follows.

To W. M. Thackeray

Rome, 126 Via Felice: April 21, [1861].

Dear Mr. Thackeray, — Pray consider the famous 'tooth' (a wise tooth !) as extracted under chloroform, and no pain suffered by anybody.

To prove that I am not sulky, I send another contribution, which may prove too much, perhaps — and, if you think so, dispose of the supererogatory virtue by burning the manuscript, as I am sure I may rely on your having done with the last.

I confess it, dear Mr. Thackeray, never was anyone turned out of a room for indecent behaviour in a more gracious and conciliatory manner ! Also, I confess that from your 'Cornhill' standpoint (paterfamilias looking on) you are probably right ten times over. From mine, however, I may not be wrong, and I appeal to you as the deep man you are, whether it is not the higher mood, which on Sunday bears with the 'plain word,' so offensive on Monday, during the cheating across the counter? I am not a 'fast woman.' I don't like coarse subjects, or the coarse treatment of any subject. But I am deeply convinced that the corruption of our society requires not shut doors and windows, but light and air: and that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to *ignore* vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere. Has paterfamilias, with his Oriental traditions and veiled female faces, very successfully dealt with a certain class of evil? What if materfamilias, with her quick sure instincts and honest innocent eyes, do more towards their expulsion by simply looking at them and calling them by their names? See what insolence you put me up to by your kind way of naming my dignities — 'Browning's wife and Penini's mother.'

And I, being vain (turn some people out of a room and you don't humble them properly), retort with — 'materfamilias !'

Our friend Mr. Story has just finished a really grand statue of the 'African Sybil.' It will place him very high.

Where are you all, Annie, Minnie? — Why don't you come and see us in Rome?

My husband bids me give you his kind regards, and I shall send Pen's love with mine to your dear girls.

Most truly yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

We go to Florence in the latter part of May.

Before leaving Florence, however, the following letter was written to Mr. Thackeray, which I quote from the same article by Mrs. Ritchie. The poem alluded to must, however, be 'The North and the South,'[1] Mrs. Browning's last poem, written with reference to Hans Andersen's visit to Rome; not 'A Musical Instrument,' as Mrs. Ritchie suggests, which had been written some time previously.

To W. M. Thackeray

Rome, 126 Via Felice: [May 21, 1861].

Dear Mr. Thackeray, — I hope you received my note and last poem. I hope still more earnestly that you won't think I am putting my spite against your chastening hand into a presumptuous and troublesome fluency.

But Hans Christian Andersen is here, charming us all, and not least the children. So I wrote these verses — not for 'Cornhill' this month, of course — though I send them now that they may lie over at your service (if you are so pleased) for some other month of the summer.

We go to Florence on the first of June, and lo! here is the twenty-first of May.

With love to dear Annie and Minny,

I remain, most truly yours,

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[1] *Poetical Works*, v. 6.

To Miss I. Blagden

Rome: Saturday, [about May 1861].

Ever dearest Isa, — Now that Robert's letter is gone, I am able for shame to write. His waiting did not *mean* a slackness of kindness, but a tightness of entanglement in other things; and then absolutely he has got to the point of doing without reading. Nothing but clay does he care for, poor lost soul. But you will see, I hope, from what he has written (to judge by what he speaks), that he is not so lost as to be untouched by Agnes.[1] . . .

I send you, dear, two more translations for Dall' Ongaro. You will have given him my former message. I began that letter to him, and was interrupted; and then, considering the shortness of our time here, would not begin another. You will have explained, and will make him thoroughly understand, that in sending him a verbal and literal translation I never thought of exacting such a thing from *him*, but simply of letting him have the advantage of seeing the *raw, naked poetry as it stands*. In fact, my translation is scarcely Italian, I know very well. I mean it for English rather. Conventional and idiomatical Italian forms have been expressly avoided. I have used the Italian as a net to catch the English in for the use of an Italian poet! Let him understand.

We shall be soon in our Florence now. I am rather stronger, but so weak still that my eyes dazzle to think of it. Povera me!

Tell Dall' Ongaro that his friend M. Carl Grün had enough of me in one visit. He never came again, though I prayed him to come. I have not been equal to receiving in the evening, and perhaps he expected an invitation. I go to bed at eight on most nights. I'm the rag of a Ba. Yet I *am* stronger, and look much so, it seems to me. Mr. Story

[1] 'Agnes Tremorne,' Miss Blagden's novel.

is *doing* Robert's bust, which is likely to be a success.[1] Hatty brought us a most charming design for a fountain for Lady Marion Alford. The imagination is unfolding its wings in Hatty. She is quite of a mind to spend the summer with you at Florence or elsewhere. The Storys talk of Switzerland. . . .

Andersen (the Dane) came to see me yesterday — kissed my hand, and seemed in a general *verve* for embracing. He is very earnest, very simple, very childlike. I like him. Pen says of him, 'He is not really pretty. He is rather like his own ugly duck, but his mind has *developed* into a swan.'

That wasn't bad of Pen, was it? He gets on with his Latin too. And, Isa, he has fastened a half-franc to his button-hole, for the sake of the beloved image, and no power on earth can persuade him out of being so ridiculous. I was base enough to say that it wouldn't please the Queen of Spain! And he responded, he 'chose her to know that he *did* love Napoleon'!

Isa, I send these two last poems that Dall' Ongaro may be aware of my sympathy's comprehending more sides than one of Italian experience.

We have taken no apartment yet!!!

To Miss Browning

Florence: June 7, 1861 [postmark].

I can't let Robert's disagreeable letter go alone, dearest Sarianna, though my word will be as heavy as a stone at the bottom of it. I am deeply sorry you should have had the vain hope of seeing Robert and Pen. As for me, I know my place; I am only good for a drag chain. But, dear, don't fancy it has been the fault of my *will*. In fact, I said almost too much at Rome to Robert, till he fancied I had

[1] After Mrs. Browning's death, Mr. Story made a companion bust of her, and both busts were subsequently executed in marble on the commission of Mr. George Barrett, who presented them to Mr. R. Barrett Browning, in whose possession they have since remained.

set my selfwill on tossing myself up as a halfpenny, and coming down on the wrong side. Now, in fact, it was not at all (nearly) for Arabel that I wished to go, only I did really wish and do my best to go. He, on the other hand, before we left Rome, had made up his mind (helped by a stray physician of mine, whom he met in the street) that it would be a great risk to carry me north. He (Robert) always a little exaggerates the difficulties of travelling, and there's no denying that I have less strength than is usual to me even at the present time. I touched the line of vexing him, with my resistance to the decision, but he is so convinced that repose is necessary for me, and that the lions in the path will be all asleep by this time next year, that I yielded. Certainly he has a right to command me away from giving him unnecessary anxieties. What does vex me is that the dearest nonno should not see his Peni this year, and that you, dear, should be disappointed, *on my account again*. That's hard on us all. We came home into a cloud here. I can scarcely command voice or hand to name *Cavour*.[1] That great soul, which meditated and made Italy, has gone to the Diviner country. If tears or blood could have saved him to us, he should have had mine. I feel yet as if I could scarcely comprehend the greatness of the vacancy. A hundred Garibaldis for such a man. There is a hope that certain solutions had been prepared between him and the Emperor, and that events will slide into their grooves. May God save Italy. Dear M. Milsand had pleased me so by his appreciation, but there *are* great difficulties. The French press, tell him, has, on the whole, done great service, except that part of it under the influence of the ultra-montane and dynastic opposition parties. And as to exaggerated statements, it is hard, even here, to get at the truth (with regard to the state of the south), and many Italian liberals have had hours of anxiety and even of despondency. English friends of ours, very candid and

[1] Cavour died on June 6, 1861.

liberal, have gone to Naples full of hope, and returned hoping nothing — yet they are wrong, unless this bitter loss makes them right —

Your loving Ba —

Robert tears me away ——

With this letter the correspondence of Mrs. Browning, so far, at least, as it is extant or accessible, comes to an end. The journey to Paris had been abandoned, but it does not appear that there was any cause to apprehend that her life could now be reckoned only by days. Yet so it was. For the past three years, it is evident, her strength had been giving way. Attacks of physical illness weakened her, without being followed by any adequate rally; but more than all, the continuous stress and strain of mental anxiety wore her strength away. The war of 1859, the liberation of Sicily and Naples, the intense irritation of feeling in connection with English opinion of Louis Napoleon and his policy, the continual ebb and flow of rumours concerning Venetia and the Papal States, the illness and death of her sister Henrietta — all these sources of anxiety told terribly on her sensitive, emotional mind, and thereby on her enfeebled body. The fragility of her appearance had always struck strangers. So far back as 1851, Bayard Taylor remarked that 'her frame seemed to be altogether disproportionate to her soul.' Her 'fiery soul' did, indeed, with a far more literal truth than can often be the case, fret her 'puny body to decay, and o'er-informed its tenement of clay.' Her last illness — or, it may more truly be said, the last phase of that illness which had been present with her for years — was neither long nor severe; but she had no more strength left to resist it. Shortly after her return to Casa Guidi another bronchial attack developed itself, to all appearance just like many others that she had had before; but this time there was no recovery.

Of the last scene no other account need be asked or

wished for than that given by Mr. Browning himself in a letter to Miss Haworth, dated July 20, 1861.[1]

My dear Friend, — I well know you feel, as you say, for her once and for me now. Isa Blagden, perfect in all kindness to me, will have told you something, perhaps, and one day I shall see you and be able to tell you myself as much as I can. The main comfort is that she suffered very little pain, none beside that ordinarily attending the simple attacks of cold and cough she was subject to, had no presentiment of the result whatever, and was consequently spared the misery of knowing she was about to leave us: she was smilingly assuring me that she was 'better,' 'quite comfortable, if I would but come to bed,' to within a few minutes of the last. I think I foreboded evil at Rome, certainly from the beginning of the week's illness, but when I reasoned about it, there was no justifying fear. She said on the last evening 'It is merely the old attack, not so severe a one as that of two years ago; there is no doubt I shall soon recover,' and we talked over plans for the summer and next year. I sent the servants away and her maid to bed, so little reason for disquietude did there seem. Through the night she slept heavily and brokenly — that was the bad sign; but then she would sit up, take her medicine, say unrepeatable things to me, and sleep again. At four o'clock there were symptoms that alarmed me; I called the maid and sent for the doctor. She smiled as I proposed to bathe her feet, 'Well, you *are* determined to make an exaggerated case of it!' Then came what my heart will keep till I see her again and longer — the most perfect expression of her love to me within my whole knowledge of her. Always smilingly, happily, and with a face like a girl's, and in a few minutes she died in my arms, her head on my cheek. These incidents so sustain me that I tell them to her beloved ones as their right: there was no lingering, nor acute pain, nor consciousness of separation,

[1] Mrs. Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning*, p. 249.

but God took her to Himself as you would lift a sleeping child from a dark uneasy bed into your arms and the light. Thank God! Annunziata thought, by her earnest ways with me, happy and smiling as they were, that she must have been aware of our parting's approach, but she was quite conscious, had words at command, and yet did not even speak of Peni, who was in the next room. The last word was, when I asked, 'How do you feel?' 'Beautiful.' . . .

So ended on earth the most perfect example of wedded happiness in the history of literature — perfect in the inner life and perfect in its poetical expression. It was on June 29, 1861, that Mrs. Browning died. She was buried at Florence, where her body rests in a sarcophagus designed by her friend and her husband's friend, Frederic Leighton, the future President of the Royal Academy. At a later date, when her husband was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, her remains might have been transferred to England, to lie with his among the great company of English poets in which they had earned their places. But it was thought better, on the whole, to leave them undisturbed in the land and in the city which she had loved so well, and which had been her home so long. In life and in death she had been made welcome in Florence. The Italians, as her husband said, seemed to have understood her by an instinct; and upon the walls of Casa Guidi is a marble slab, placed there by the municipality of Florence, and bearing an inscription from the pen of the Italian poet, Tommaseo: —

QUI SCRISSE E MORÌ
ELISABETTA BARRETT BROWNING
CHE IN CUORE DI DONNA CONCILIAVA
SCIENZA DI DOTTO E SPIRITO DI POETA
E FECE DEL SUO VERSO AUREO ANELLO
FRA ITALIA E INGHILTERRA.
PONE QUESTA LAPIDE
FIRENZE GRATA
1861.

It is with words adapted from this memorial that her husband, seven years later, closed his own great poem, praying that the 'ring,' to which he likens it, might but —

> 'Lie outside thine, Lyric Love,
> Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet praised),
> Linking our England to his Italy.'

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OCT 29	Barbara Lepak
APR 8	Joe Opperson
DEC 15	K. Roch
DEC 22 '65	Barbara Dalkey

PR Browning 54153
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